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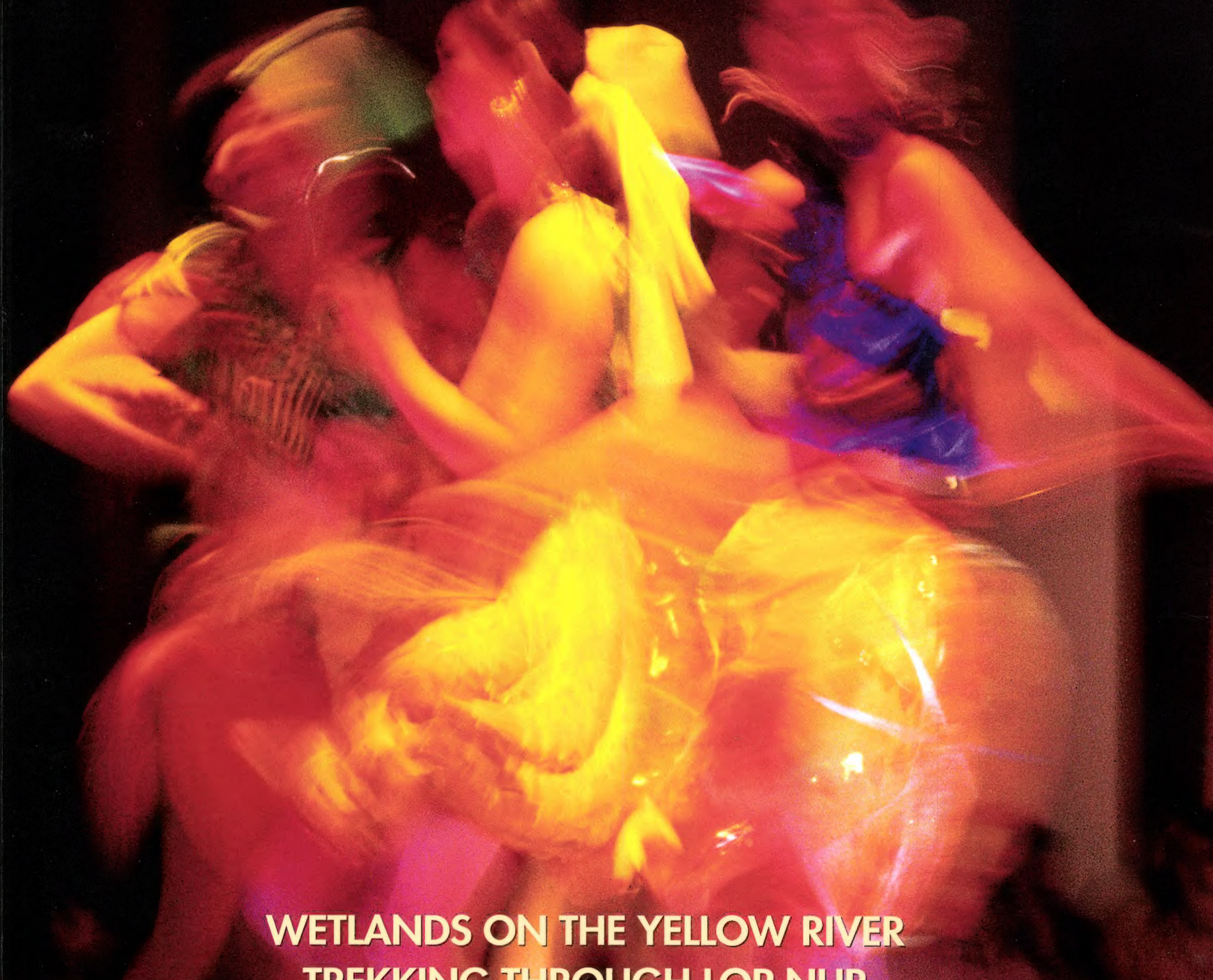

WETLANDS ON THE YELLOW RIVER

TREKKING THROUGH LOP NUR

THE BUZZING CITY OF GUANGZHOU

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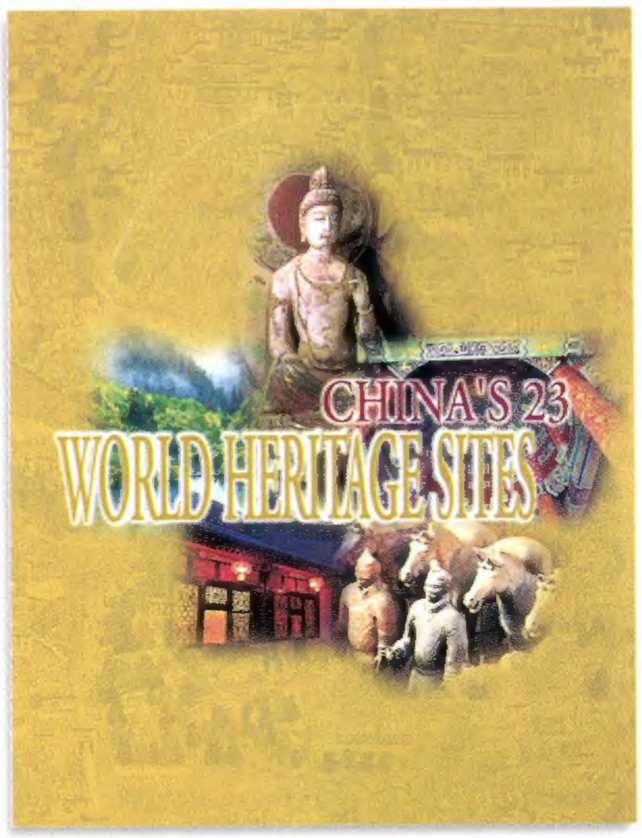
China's 23 World Heritage Sites



Today, more than 580 cultural and natural sites have been placed on UNESCO's World Heritage list. China, one of the world's four ancient civilisations, also has its share of these heritage sites. Up to 1999, 23 sites in the country have been honourably put on the list. These include the Mountain Resort in Chengde, the Temple of Heaven, the Ruins of Zhoukoudian, the Great Wall, the Forbidden City, the Summer Palace, the ancient city of Pingyao, Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang, Qin Shihuang's Mausoleum in Xi'an, Wulingyuan, Huanglong, Jiuzhaigou, Mount Emei, the ancient town of Lijiang, Potala Palace, Mount Wudang, Mount Taishan, Confucius' Temple, Mansion and Cemetery in Qufu, Suzhou Gardens, Mount Huangshan, Mount Lushan, Mount Wuyi and Dazu Rock Carvings.

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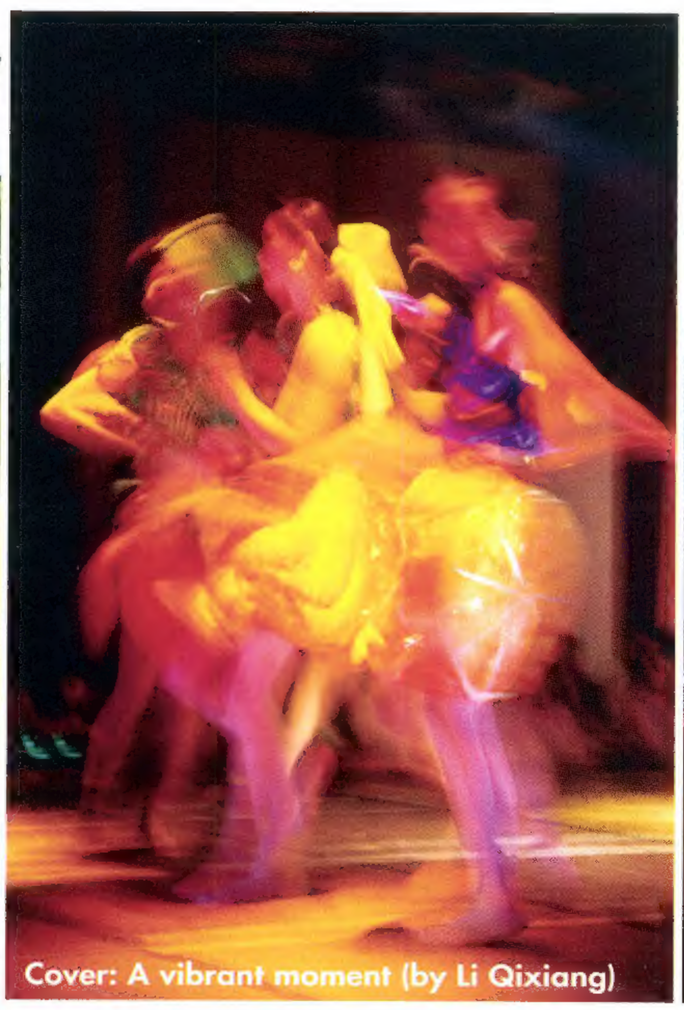

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Photos & article by Shi Baoxiu, Dianna Lau, Tsang Po Ki, Chu Kit

Guangzhou, capital of South China's Guangdong Province, served as the starting point of the Silk Road on the Sea in ancient China and also played an important role in modern Chinese history, leaving it a rich cultural legacy. It is one of the most vigorous cities in China today. Our reporters take you to explore some of the newer facets of the metropolis and its environs — its restaurants, opera houses, museums, entertainment and shopping centres.

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Photos by Hu Wugong, An Yongcan Article by Hu Wugong

Seven hot springs are scattered on the banks of the Yellow River. In winter, the warm vapour veils the villages in mist, creating a fairyland. Many varieties of migratory birds come to the wetlands surrounding the hot springs to find their paradise. Since ancient times, the local people have used the spring water to irrigate their fields; today, the hot springs are better known and tourism is beginning to flourish.

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— Diary of an Adventure into Lop Nur

Photos & article by Lu Renjia

Lop Nur in Xinjiang used to be a saltwater lake but has gradually become a vast Gobi, known as the "sea of death". Walking through Lop Nur is one of the popular tourist programmes in China's Northwest and this author from Hong Kong gives his account.

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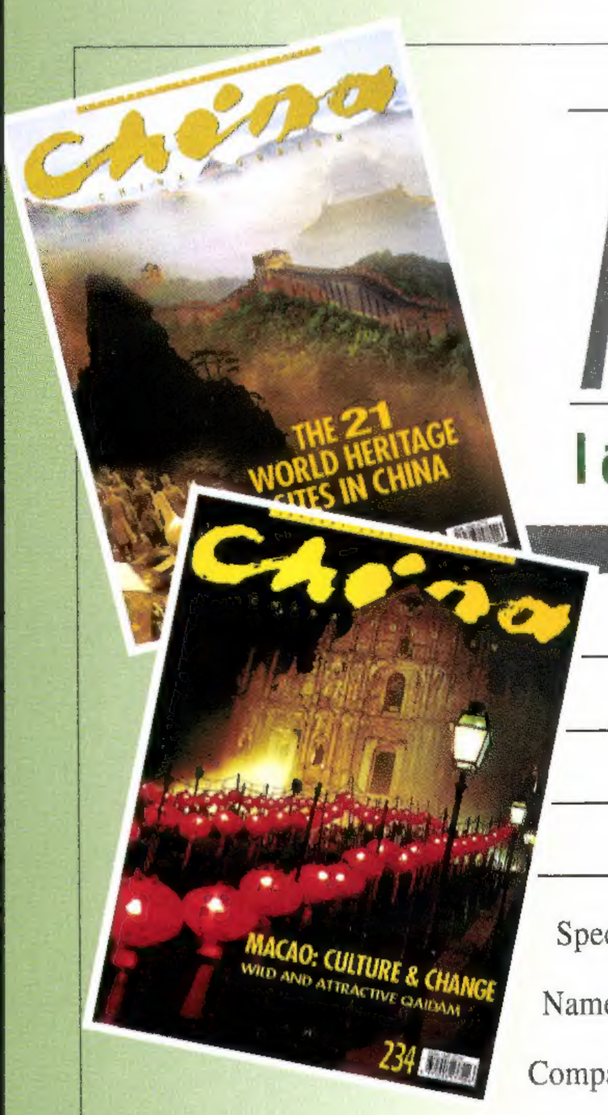

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FROM THE EDITOR

In the Eye of the Beholder

Some of our stories in this issue will leave you appreciating your favourite armchair more than ever, while others are practically guaranteed to send you packing....

The city of Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong Province, lies at the head of the Pearl River Delta. Its name alone tends to conjure up images of noise, chaos and pollution, even to those who have never visited. A group of reporters recently went all out to look beyond its rugged façade and explore some of the new attractions the city and its environs have to offer. From culture to shopping to food, entertainment and thrills, they came up with an enticing verdict. Our feature story says it all.

"As big as cartwheels and looking like boiling cauldrons" is one way the seven wondrous hot springs of Qiachuan in Shaanxi Province have been described. In "Wetlands on the Yellow River", our author visited this enchanting region in winter and brought back some stunning images to share. Then in total contrast is Lop Nur, one of the hottest, driest regions in China. Read how a group of courageous Hong Kongers braved this infamous desert region and returned weary but triumphant!

We all know how one thing leads to another. Well, there are no finer examples of this truism than both our Yangtianhu Prairie story and that of the educational tour programme. The former tells of how one man's solo motorcycle trip led to the realisation of a heart-stirring vision, while the latter looks at the Sending Help To Mountain Schools programme and how it came into being.

In other stories, we hope you'll be charmed by the "Kingdom of the Rose" and enlightened by Peking Opera, and if a destination takes your fancy, check out those travel tips — getting there may be easier than you think!

Photo by Dianna Lau

Hunan to See Tourism Boost

The Central China province of Hunan is going all out to develop into a tourist centre. Hunan has an abundance of resources and tourism has been one of the fastest growing industries in the province over the past few years. In 2000, the number of overseas and domestic travellers to Hunan reached 459,000 and 46.5 million respectively, bringing in a revenue of 14.8 billion yuan (US$1.78 billion), 4 percent of the province's GDP.

In addition to its numerous historical sites and natural scenic spots, the province also enjoys good ecological conditions. About 52.4 percent of its land is covered with trees and grass. Economic development has also laid a solid foundation for the development of modern tourism. The province now has more than 200 top hotels, 252 travel agencies and over 200,000 people are currently involved in the tourism industry.

Among the most popular toruist destinations in Hunan are Zhangjiajie, a beautiful landscape that has been listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage site, Shaoshan, late Chairman Mao Zedong's hometown, and Mount Hengshan ,one of China's Five Sacred Mountains.

Railway on the Roof of the World Begins Construction

The dreams of many Tibetans to travel by train in their home region are about to come true. Construction on the Qinghai-Tibet Railway will begin in July and reach completion within six years. The 1,118 km railway starts in Xining, capital of Qinghai Province, and ends in Lhasa, capital of the Tibet Autonomous Region. The section between Xining and Golmud, Qinghai, was built 10 years ago and has been in full operation since then.

Construction of the remainder of the railway will be one of the most arduous projects on earth, as 960 km of it will be built at an altitude of over 4,000 metres. Half of the track will be laid on land that remains frozen for long periods during the year and is vulnerable to climatic changes. Of the section to be built in Tibet, 550 km of the tracks will be laid on frozen earth, including a section of 190 km considered as critically unstable. The project has involved a total of 1,680 engineers, including many senior railway and technical experts who have conducted research on the construction of railway tracks for decades. All existing technical problems have now been resolved and an assurance has been given that the construction of the Qinghai-Tibet Railway can be carried out safely, also that the tracks laid on frozen earth will remain in good shape for 50 years.

Tibet is the only administrative region in China without railway lines. The construction of the railway on the Roof of the World has been placed at the top of the Central Government's go-west agenda. A more convenient transport system will greatly enhance the economic development of Tibet and Qinghai.

International Go Festival in Guiyang, Guizhou

The Guiyang International Go Festival 2001, the first of its kind in China, will be held during August 10-13 this year in Guiyang, capital of Southwest China's Guizhou Province.

Guiyang won the bid for the event over Beijing, Chengdu of Sichuan and Jiangmen of Guangdong. Among the series of events to be held at the festival are three major contests, including one between Go world champions from China, Japan and the Republic of Korea; the International Women's Professional Championships; and screening trials for the China National Teenagers Team. The grand opening ceremony on August 10 will attract more than 3,000 professionals and amateurs, who will play 2,001 games of Go simultaneously.

Go, called *Weiqi* in Chinese, is a traditional Chinese chess game. It is played with black and white pieces on a board with 361 crosses. Many Chinese believe that the game of Go reflects the very nature of life. An estimated 50 million people play Go around the world. Though Guiyang does not have first-class players at present, the city plans to establish Go clubs and host more matches in co-operation with the China Chess Academy to foster homegrown talent.

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Pleasure Yachts to Cruise on Huangpu River, Shanghai

The Bund lying by the Huangpu River in Shanghai has become an increasingly popular scenic spot, with its characteristic buildings lining the riverside and the rapid development of Pudong on the opposite bank of the river. However, some people have remarked that there ought to be a pleasure yacht cruising on the Huangpu River, as a facility such as this would be an asset to Shanghai's tourism industry.

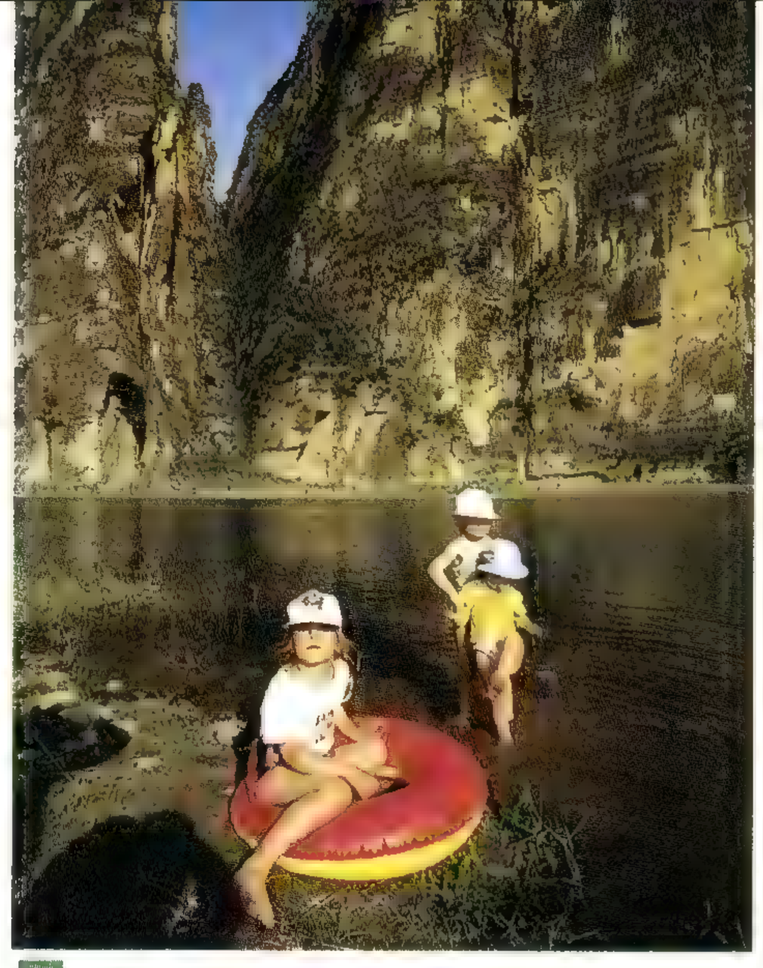
The Shanghai DeFever Yachts Industry Company is now ready to put its yachts to work and is confident that locally made yachts will soon be seen floating on the Huangpu River and another river of Shanghai, the Suzhou River. At present, all the boats cruising on the Huangpu are former passenger ships revamped. The cruise company would like to purchase luxury yachts from the international market, but the prices are too high. It is hoped that inexpensive locally made yachts will soon be available. There is every indication that the yacht building industry will enjoy a bright future in Shanghai, as not only the Bund, but a larger area between the Yangpu and Nanpu bridges on the Huangpu River will be transformed into a recreational tourist area.

Hainan Air Routes Offer Discounts

Eight domestic air routes linking Hainan, the South China province, have begun offering passenger fare discounts. Seven other routes linking some northern and southern cities on the mainland were already offering discounts.

Flights linking Hainan with Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Chengdu, Chongqing and Kunmin will be sold at 60 percent of their original price, and discount prices for students, teachers and soldiers will continue. With this policy, the traveller can fly between Beijing and Hainan for 1,080 yuan each way, as opposed to the original cost of 1,800 yuan.

The Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) adopted a policy to ban all fare discounts in 1998 to prevent competition among stated-owned domestic airlines that would lead to sharp losses. Unexpectedly, the ban caused revenue drops in the tourism industry. The CAAC is now revising the discount-ban policy.



Ten Parks to Be Built in Miyun, Beijing

Ten new parks covering various themes are under construction in Miyun County in the northern suburbs of Beijing. Among them, the Olympic Park will become the largest fitness centre in suburban Beijing. The park will cover 14.5 hectares of land on the bank of the Baihe River, and its construction will cost 15.81 million yuan (US$1.9 million).

Construction of the 10 parks is scheduled to reach completion in two or three years, with a total investment of 41.95 million yuan (US$5 million). In addition, a series of other projects are in the pipeline to upgrade Miyun's tourist facilities, including the Beijing-Miyuan Expressway, two public squares, three green belts and four bridges.

A-Ma Village to Be Built, Macao

The government of the Macao Special Administrative Region has decided to build the A-Ma Cultural Village on the Coloane Island, where an inauguration cermony has been held. The village will cover an area of 7,000 square metres, surrounding the A-Ma Statue located on the hill behind the Black Sand Beach.

A-Ma, also called Tianhou, or the Goddess of the Sea, is a legendary female, who is believed by fishermen in southeast China's coastal areas to be able to grant them good fortune whilst at sea. Macao's A-Ma Temple has a history of more than 500 years. It is one of the most attractive sites in the city. The A-Ma Statue on Coloane is the highest statue of its kind in the world.

Designers hope that the cultural village will be the best representative of the A-Ma culture among the more than 2,500 A-Ma temples in the world.

Attractions

Tengchong, Hometown of Overseas Chinese

Yunnan Heshun Township, famed as home of overseas Chinese in Tengchong County, Yunnan Province, has been attracting tourists with its unique architecture and customs. Xu Xiake, an ancient Chinese traveller, referred to Tengchong as "the very west city of Yunnan Province", describing it as the "No.1 Border City". Ai Siqi, a famous contemporary Chinese philosopher, was also born here.

Many new attractions have been opened in Tengchong County in recent years. These include a village featuring the culture of overseas Chinese, a building housing relics collected in the Heshun Library, the residence of Ai Siqi, and a museum showcasing the culture, history and customs of overseas Chinese. Hostels opened by local households are now available for tourists. In addition, residential areas showing typical Ming- or Qing-dynasty features have been refurbished.

News

Tourist Visa upon Arrival, Guilin

Guangxi Under the tide of developing the vast west of China, Guilin has become a hit tourist destination as well as one of the cities favoured by overseas investors. In order to ease the immigration procedure for visitors, Guilin began issuing tourist visas upon arrival from April 1 this year.

Individual overseas tourists or group travellers can apply directly for an immigration visa in Guilin's Liangjiang International Airport by providing valid travel documents, such as passports of countries that have a diplomatic relationship or official trade agreement with China, travel documents of other countries, letters provided by Chinese reception units, or invitation documents in relation to conferences held in China.

News

Visa Not Required for SAR Travellers to EU from May

Travel Visa According to the decision of the Legal and Civil Affairs Commission of the European Union (EU) made in March, beginning in May this year, all holders of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) and the Macao Special Administrative Region (MSAR) passports need not apply for a travel visa when visit 15 EU member countries, as well as two Schengen states, Iceland and Norway. They will be allowed to stay for 30 days in these countries.

Previously, HKSAR passport holders could only enter Britain and Ireland without travel visas, while holders of the British National Overseas (BNO) passports could enter seven countries. Now it will be much more convenient for citizens of Hong Kong who hold a HKSAR passport to travel to EU member countries.

The EU countries and Schengen states involved are: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Holland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Britain, Norway and Iceland.

Flights

Urümqi to Hong Kong Direct Flight from June

Xinjiang From June 23 to October 6, 2001, a charter flight will be available to link Hong Kong and Urümqi, capital of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. The Hong Kong Tongbao Groups has signed an agreement with the Xinjiang Airlines to fly the charter flight (XO 781) once a week.

As western China is taking off in economic development, direct flights play an increasingly important role in fostering ties between Xinjiang and the rest of the world. Activities have also been arranged to promote Xinjiang in Hong Kong and encourage more commercial opportunities.

Hotel

Central Hotel Shanghai — a New Name for Hospitality in Shanghai

Shanghai Staying in Shanghai can be more satisfying than ever now. The four-star Central Hotel Shanghai, conveniently situated in the hub of Shanghai, is just adjacent to Century Square on the Nanjing Road, or China's No.1 Shopping Street.

Central Hotel Shanghai has 27 floors, plus two levels of underground parking space. Its 280 guest rooms are designed in European style and fully equipped with state-of-the-art facilities. The hotel offers food of four distinctive styles in four restaurants: the Lobby Bar, the 24-hour Coffee Shop, the Wangbaohe Chinese Restaurant and the Golden Leaf Restaurant.

The hotel's conference rooms and banquet halls are elegantly decorated and equipped with advanced facilities, suitable for all kinds of meetings. Its great variety of recreational and shopping facilities fulfil the needs of its customers: Karaoke rooms, billiards room, bowling alleys, gymnasium, aerobic room, beauty salon, sauna centre, and disco hall.

The Central Hotel Shanghai is the ideal place for business travellers and holidaymakers.

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Fax: (21) 5396 5088; Website: http://www.centralhotelshanghai.com

Attractions

Yannanfei Tea Farm Resort

Guangdong An eight-hour drive from Shenzhen will take you to the Yannanfei (Goose Flying to the South) Tea Farm Resort in Meixian County in South China's Guangdong Province. Embraced by picturesque mountains and waters, Yannanfei is a newly developed tourist resort in Meixian.

As its name suggests, the resort is famous for its tea farm. From a higher level up on the mountain you can take in the full expanse of the emerald green tea farm.

Since the resort has just opened, the admission is set at a lower rate (30 yuan) so as to attract more visitors. The admission ticket can also be used for food of the same value provided in the resort.

An exquisitely built teahouse serving the famous teas produced in Meixian is the best place for travellers to take a rest. While listening to beautiful traditional Chinese music, you can enjoy fragrant tea served in wonderful tea sets. Staying in the villas for the night, travellers may utilise the various recreational facilities provided, such as the swimming pool, fishing pond and tennis court. For a quiet and relaxing break, the Yannanfei Tea Farm is the ideal choice.

New Spot

Ancient Grotto Discovered in Datong

Shanxi A group of archaeologists has recently discovered an ancient grotto in Luyeyuan, Datong, not far from where the famous Yungang Grottoes are situated. Research and tests show that this grotto has an even longer history than those of Yungang.

Lying eight kilometres northeast of Datong, Luyeyuan was entirely unknown until recently. Similar to the Yungang Grottoes, the Luyeyuan Grotto was also built along a mountain facing south. Three stone Buddha statues were found inside. Donations from both local villagers and generous others have been used to build protective walls and houses around the grotto.

The Luyeyuan Grotto was established in 471, 23 years earlier than its Yungang counterpart, which adds significantly to its historical and archaeological value. It is now listed as a new scenic spot by the Datong government, despite the fact that much of the grotto has been severely damaged and is in need of repair.

News

More Scenic Spots to be Built in Kashi

Xinjiang The local government of Kashi in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region will allocate over 100 million yuan to establish four big scenic areas and other spots in the area to make the city more attractive to tourists.

The planned tourist projects include Dawakun Desert Scenic Area in Yopurga County; the Wufuzak and Langan ethnic cultural parks, both in Shufu County, occupying 170 and 20 hectares respectively; and the Pamir Scenic Area, including the Muztagata Glacier Park and Taheman Hot Springs Centre, in Taxkorgan Tajik autonomous County.

Kashi is a city with the richest Uygur customs in Xinjiang. It is also famous for its natural wonders such as Mount Muztagata, known as the "Father of Glacial Mountains", and the thrilling scenery of the Pamir Plateau. The bazaar, "market" in Uygur, and the Id Kak Mosque here are major attractions for tourists from home and abroad.

News

Leshan Giant Buddha Refurbished

Sichuan Following a refurbishment programme lasting from March to April this year, the 1,200-year-old Leshan Giant Buddha in Sichuan Province is now open again.

The Buddha statue was found seriously damaged before tne refurbishment. There were cracks in its spiral headgear, and pieces had begun to fall off; water stains were found around the corners of its eyes due to humid conditions; the nose had turned black, and wild grasses were growing on its body. Apart from damage by tourists, increasingly serious air and water pollution brought by the industrialisation and urbanisation of Sichuan Province have also caused damage. The evaporated polluted water of Minjiang River formed acid rain that further eroded the ancient site.

The refurbishment project focused on the statue's head and chest this time, using as much traditional building material as possible in order to restore the statue's original appearance. The Leshan Giant Buddha was refurbished in the 1960s, 70s, 80s and 90s, but both the materials and skills available were limited by the conditions at that time.

Relics

Hung Hsing Shrine and Liya Synagogue Win Relic Protection Award

Hong Kong The Hung Hsing Shrine and the Liya Synagogue in Hong Kong have won the Relic Protection Award (Asian region) sponsored by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). According to the awards committee, this award is to see busy commercial cities like Hong Kong maintain their heritage sites well.

The Hung Hsing Shrine, assumed to be built in 1889, is situated in Sai Kung. Lord Hung is believed to be the God of the Sea and is popular among the older generation in Hong Kong. The shrine was established from donations made by the locals. In November 1999, the Hong Kong Jockey Club and the Antiquities and Monuments Office sponsored the refurbishment of the temple. Built in 1902, the Liya Synagogue was repaired in 1998.

The Relic Protection Awards (Asian region) are classified in 26 categories, including private residences, hotels, religious architecture, and cultural venues. Winners are chosen from 12 countries in the Asia/Pacific region.

Hotel

St. Regis Shanghai Opens in Pudong

Shanghai The St. Regis Shanghai, a new landmark in Pudong, Shanghai, will open in July 2001. The hotel's deluxe guestrooms and suites will bring a new level of comfort and luxury to travellers to China.

The hotel boasts a distinctively modern and sleek architectural design. It offers 318 Hirsch Bedner interior designed guestrooms and suites with the finest quality furnishings. The hotel also features more than 1,000 square metres of meeting space, a comprehensive 24-hour business centre and complete fitness, health and spa facilities.

Add: 889 Dongfang Rd, Pudong, Shanghai; Tel: (21) 6875 9888; Fax: (21) 6875 6789.

International Travel Expo Hong Kong

Golden Opportunity to Expedite Market Growth

Gathering over 400 exhibitors and nearly 400 buyers from worldwide markets, the 15th International Travel Expo Hong Kong (ITE HK 2001) was held during 7-10 June, 2001 at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre. The latest show proved that ITE Hong Kong continues to play an important role in encouraging business and information exchange among travel professionals.

The first two days of the show were for trade visitors while the last two days were open to the public. A series of tailor-made programmes were designed to maximise the benefits of the participants, whether exhibitors, buyers or visitors.

In order to facilitate business discussion between exhibitors and buyers, exhibitors were provided with a detailed buyer list a month prior to the show. Both parties could meet each other and schedule an on-site appointment with potential business partners at the "Buyers Meet Sellers On-Site Scheduling Session" held on the first day of the show.

The Outbound Travel Seminar was another highlight of the show. Representatives from various countries and regions, including Poland, Australia, Singapore, India, Thailand, Korea, and Taiwan and Hong Kong, invited audiences to hear the latest progress and hot news about the outbound travel market for the respective locations.

With imminent access to WTO, the outbound travel market of China claimed a big slice of the cake. The seminar entitled "Expert Tips on the Massive Chinese Outbound Market Potential", presented by the representative of China National Tourism Administration, provided all the necessary information a market player needs to know when entering into this booming market. Apart from the concurrent outbound ones, seminars relating to travel services were also organised to meet the needs of specific groups of visitors.

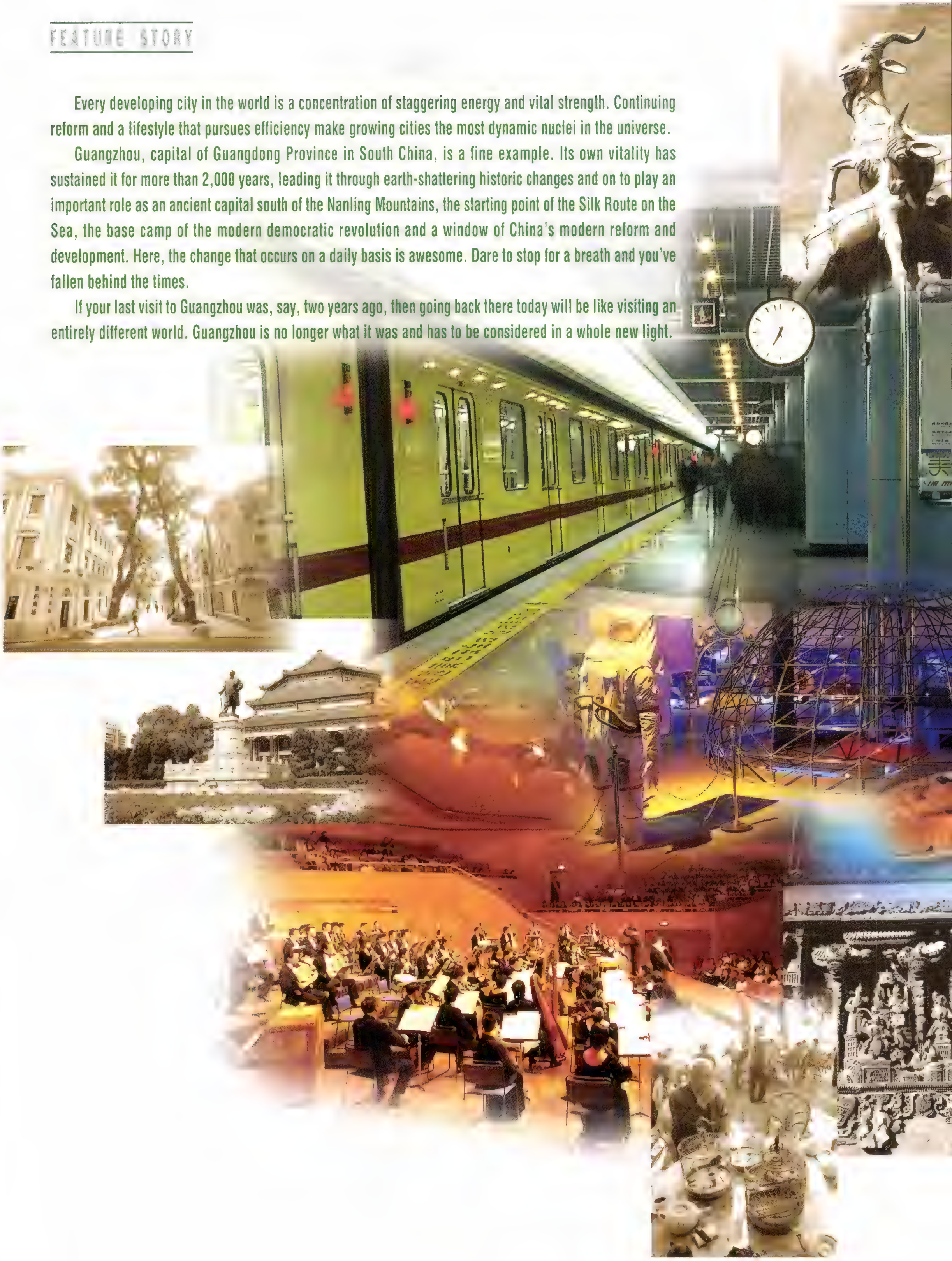
Many tourism-related companies, such as airlines and hotels, also took an active part in the event. Dragonair (Hong Kong) had a 36-square-metre booth featuring information about its route network, products and services. Dragonair flies to more destinations in China than any other overseas air company. It is also in the process of doubling its fleet, a programme that will be completed by the end of 2005. Dragonair is a Hong Kong-based airline, operating a fleet of five A330-300s, three A321s, seven A320s and a Boeing 747-200 freighter. The airline's passenger network covers 27 destinations across the Asia-Pacific region, while its cargo network connects the markets of Europe, the Middle East and China.

China Travel Service (H.K.) Ltd. also joined ITE HK 2001 to introduce its broad range of services and travel products to trade visitors and the general public. CTSHK is committed to establishing a global network to facilitate its tourism operation. The company has 35 branches in Hong Kong and Macao, and 16 branches in North America, Europe and the Asia and Pacific region. The close contact among the branches facilitates the development of CTSHK's global travel service network, which in turn greatly enhances travel to and from China.

Every developing city in the world is a concentration of staggering energy and vital strength. Continuing reform and a lifestyle that pursues efficiency make growing cities the most dynamic nuclei in the universe.

Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong Province in South China, is a fine example. Its own vitality has sustained it for more than 2,000 years, leading it through earth-shattering historic changes and on to play an important role as an ancient capital south of the Nanling Mountains, the starting point of the Silk Route on the Sea, the base camp of the modern democratic revolution and a window of China's modern reform and development. Here, the change that occurs on a daily basis is awesome. Dare to stop for a breath and you've fallen behind the times.

If your last visit to Guangzhou was, say, two years ago, then going back there today will be like visiting an entirely different world. Guangzhou is no longer what it was and has to be considered in a whole new light.



The New Face of Guangzhou

Photos & article by Shi Baoxiu, Dianna Lau

Guangzhou, the Place to Eat

It is quite some time since my last visit to Guangzhou and my impression of the place was one of polluted air and congested traffic. So I have to say that my return on this reporting mission brought more than a few surprises. As soon as I arrived, I was immediately taken aback by the smooth and speedy flow of the traffic, the clear blue sky and the many new green areas around the city.

On the night of my arrival, the first place I called in at was a very popular music club in the city. Following some colourful steps through an open garden, I arrived at a three-storey villa. I walked inside to an indoor bar with avant-garde interior decor, and seeing the crowded dance floor, I was soon in step with the beat of the music and the atmosphere. I was so excited that I almost forgot where I was. Mesmerised, I wandered out to the roof garden and, leaning against a railing, lifted my camera. What I saw through the lens was simply fascinating. I had found a new angle from which to view the city of Guangzhou.

Wind Flower Music Club

It is a long accepted fact that Guangzhou is the best place to eat. And to eat in Guangzhou is the most rewarding aspect of any trip to this city. Surprisingly, my colleagues sent to cover the catering industry in Guangzhou weren't as excited as expected. This turned out to be simply because the time was too short to cover all that Guangzhou had to offer. Even after we split into two teams, we still had to eat our way through each day. Those covering Chinese food began with morning tea and continued until the night snack, while those doing Western dishes started their work at noon and dragged on well into the night.

We discovered so much in just a few days. For Chinese food, there are hundred-year-old brand-name restaurants, teahouses, restaurants serving cuisine from other provinces, "porridge city" and much more. For Western food, there are places serving Italian dishes, Taiwanese teahouses, cafes, live music bars, tourist bars, every one of them a pleasant surprise. The gourmet syndrome we had acquired — a big round belly — served significantly as testimony to Guangzhou's reputation as a food haven!

Liuhua Porridge City

Located inside the Liuhua Park, the food stands featuring porridge are all set up in pavilions, terraces, towers and waterside houses. At night, the surrounding lights cast their rays on the fountain to accentuate the beauty of the jade carvings and waters veiled in mist, creating a poetic atmosphere. The most important thing here, however, is the great range and delicate flavours of the porridge on offer.

The porridge here certainly belongs to the Guangzhou style, quite different from those served in Hong Kong. In fact, there are three possible serving styles to try here. In one, the porridge is stewed in a small clay pot, with varieties of fish meat, fish head, lean pork and preserved duck eggs, small fish, or pork blood bean curd. One portion costs up to 10 yuan and can serve one or two persons.

The second style involves seafood porridge served in a big pot for a whole table. The ingredients are added according to the customers' choice to include fresh fish, chicken, snake meat or frogs. The big pot is placed on the table for people to help themselves. An order is usually enough for four to six people and costs between 20 and 60 yuan.

The third option is hotpot porridge. Diners are served with cooked plain rice porridge boiling in a small iron pot set on a gas stove. The diners add their selection of seafood or freshwater products. A pot is large enough to serve six to eight diners and the price differs according to the ingredients selected.

The restaurant also serves cakes prepared with sweet potato, corn, taro and pumpkin.

Add: Liuhua Park, Renmin Road North, Yuexiu District;
Tel: (20) 8668 0108; Business hours: 11:00-6:00

Liuhua Teahouse

Northeasterner's Restaurant

Liuhua Porridge City

Crystal Cafe

Liuhua Porridge City

Liwanhu Teahouse

Liuhua Teahouse

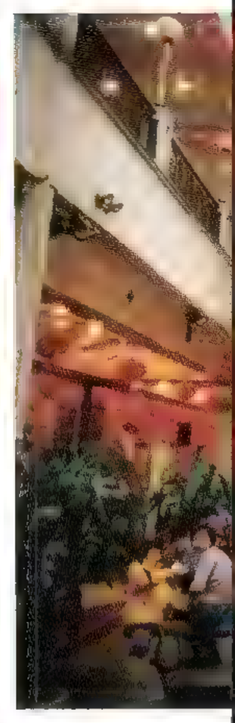
Located on the other side of the Liuhua Park, this ancient-style building stands by the lake. Visitors can enjoy a tea serving demonstration accompanied by the *zheng*, an ancient string instrument. Famous teas from various parts of the country can all be found here. Most importantly, the place serves speciality "tea snacks" to accompany the tea. The snacks, made of dough mixed with tealeaves or tea water, are certainly worth trying. They are delicately textured, with a strong refreshing taste, a treat rarely available elsewhere.

Add: Renmin Road North, Yuexiu District;
Tel: (20) 8138 3295

Similar service and performance are also available at the Liwanhu Teahouse situated in the Liwan Lake Park.

Lianxianglou Restaurant

Liwanhu Teahouse



Lianxianglou Restaurant

This is a famous traditional restaurant located in a busy section on Dishipu Road. The restaurant is famous for its Lianxiang (Lotus Seed Fragrance) moon cakes. In all, the pastry section serves nearly 100 varieties of delicately prepared cakes and pastries. The restaurant also serves other regular dishes, all equally delicious.

Add: 67 Dishipu Road, Liwan District;
Tel: (20) 8181 3388

Taotaoju Restaurant

Also on Dishipu Road, across the street from Lianxianglou, Taotaoju is known for its particular care in selecting the ingredients, processing and the special colours and shapes created for its cakes and pastries. It is very hard to find a seat here during morning tea hours and on holidays and weekends. The most famous dishes here are Ginger and Scallion Chicken and Secret-Recipe Pigeon.

Add: 20 Dishipu Road, Liwan District;
Tel: (20) 8181 6111; Business hours: 7:00-0:00

Panxi Restaurant

This famous restaurant with a history of nearly 100 years stands by the Liwan Lake on Longjin Road West. Its buildings stretch along the lake, providing diners with a pleasant environment. Its greatest attractions include the Eight-Immortals Feast and Imitation Snacks. The latter in particular are prepared in such a way that the food vividly resembles animals, fruits and vegetables. Most overseas tourist groups would arrange a meal here.

Add: 151 Longjin Road West, Liwan District;
Tel: (20) 8181 5955; Business hours: 6:30-23:30

Guangzhou Restaurant

Located on Wenchang Road South, this old restaurant is no longer as eye-catching as it used to be, a result of the host of modern buildings that have sprung up around it. Once inside, though, you will find the labyrinthine corridors and elegantly decorated dining rooms on both floors as intriguing as ever. Both the buildings and their decor manifest a distinctive royal palace style. The most famous dishes of the restaurant are its palace dishes and a complete range of Han and Manchu feasts.

Add: 2 Wenchang Road South, Liwan District;
Tel: (20) 8108 8388; Business hours: 7:00-14:30; 17:00-22:00
Branches: Saijiangxi; Shisanhang Road; Teem Stadium Road East; Baifu Plaza; Jixiang Road and Fangcun.

The Northeasterner's Restaurant

This is a chain of restaurants opened by people from China's Northeast, featuring everyday dishes. Few had expected the restaurants to do as well as they have here in the south. Among its Northeastern flavours are sauteed pork ribs, straw-hat pancakes and millet congee. Interestingly, diners can sit on brick beds at low tables to enjoy their meal. The folk interior design of the restaurants adds a special touch for visitors.

Respective adds: Hequn Road One; Garden Plaza on Teem Road South Two; 2/F, 1 Taojin Road North.
Business hours: 11:00-23:00

Crystal Cafe

The China Export Commodity Fair held twice yearly during the spring and autumn always draws visitors from all over the world, and keeps the Dongfang Hotel and China Hotel nearby particularly busy. The Crystal Cafe opposite the China Hotel is undoubtedly the best choice for a Western meal. The restaurant is built with glass. Standing in a busy area in the city, it looks just like a crystal palace, as its name suggests. It looks even more spectacular when it is lit up at night.

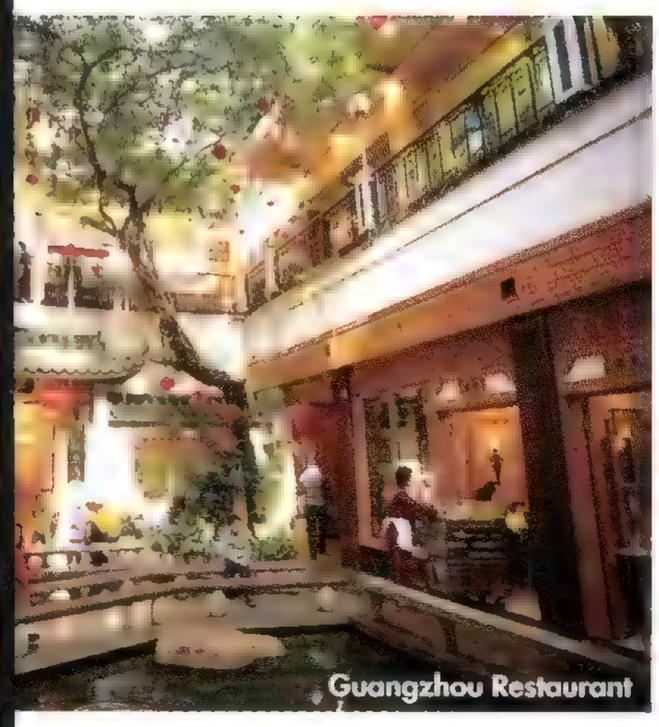
Here you can have fried chicken salad and try the apple tea. Listen to the music as you watch the flow of pedestrians passing by, and you seem to be in two different worlds at once.

The restaurant also offers tourist publications for diners to read, free of charge. The monthly *That's Guangzhou* tells you the latest trends and developments in the city, as well as information on restaurants, bars and other places of interest.

Add: Yitai Plaza, 986 Jiefang Road North;
Tel: (20) 8669 3797; Business hours: 9:00-2:30

Milano's Trattoriae Pizzeria

In Hong Kong, it is not difficult to find places serving really high quality Italian


Guangzhou Restaurant

Lianxianglou Restaurant

dishes, but I never expected to find satisfying Italian food in Guangzhou. Since it is located in a rather quiet area, this restaurant is able to arrange some outdoor tables, which give you some idea of the peace and harmony that can be found in Guangzhou. Indoors, delicious smells, warm lighting and simple decor al serve to increase the diners' appetites. My friends from Hong Kong simply couldn't believe this was Guangzhou.

With such a variety of dishes at such reasonable prices, we all chose our favourites and ended up ordering more than we could eat. There were only three of us but our table was piled with mushrooms, Italian dumplings, seafood macaroni, salami pizza and a big portion of dessert for each person. When the bill came, it was barely 100 yuan for each of us.

Add: 3-103 Xincheng Street North, Tianhe Road East; Tel: (20) 3881 0594; Business hours: 11:00-15:00, 17:00-0:00

Oro Restaurant

A few steps away from Milano's is the Oro Cafe & Tea, a place of continental European food but with some Taiwan cuisine thrown in. The elegant design and spaciousness allows every diner his or her private area in comfort. A seat near the window is especially desirable.

The place offers a variety of hot and cold beverages, cocktails and fruit drinks. Calpis, a popular milk drink from Japan, is certainly worth trying. Flavours such as beer, carrot juice and soft drinks can be added to this according to individual taste. The restaurant offers snacks, cakes and main courses, with prices similar to those in Hong Kong.

Add: 199 Tianhe Road East, Tianhe District; Tel: (20) 3881 1740; Business hours: 11:00-1:00

Peace Road Bar

Hidden on a road running alongside the Holiday Inn is a restaurant converted from a villa, known as the Peace Road Bar. The open teahouse in the front is a good spot for an evening meal and chat. Inside, it offers a completely different image and atmosphere: dim lights and resounding music provides beer drinkers with just the venue they are looking for. In the centre of the dining hall, a rotating stage is the spot where the band plays after 9:00 p.m. The second floor is mainly reserved for diners, who have the added option of sitting on the balcony and enjoying a dinner for two overlooking the street below.

The restaurant offers both Chinese and Western food. The prices are not low, but diners go for the environment and atmosphere. An evening here is certainly very pleasant.

Add: 2 Heping Road, Huanshi Road East, New Overseas Chinese Village; Tel: (20) 8358 1720; Business hours: 18:00-2:00

Wind Flower Music Club

Every trendy Guangzhou citizen knows the Wind Flower Music Club. The number of taxis parked outside is a good indicator of its popularity. According to taxi drivers, visitors to this place include both Chinese and foreigners. Tourists from outside the city would rather give up a more typical tourist attraction in order to pay a visit here.

The charm of the club begins with a rather inconspicuous staircase leading into it from the roadside. At the end of the staircase, you reach the club itself, converted from a former villa. The mysterious lighting arrangement creates a sensation of transcending time and space. A foreign DJ next to the music pit introduces extremely avant-garde music and dancers move in frenzy to the beat.

People who love peace and quiet can go to the garden to enjoy their private conversation at a candle-lit table, or have a meal of barbecued delicacies. Or they can take a bottle of beer to the second floor and watch a movie. A group of guests can even hire a private room of their own.

Unlike other disco places, Wind Flower does not charge for admission and its price for food and drinks is reasonable. Please remember to take your taxi fare though, because to spend the night in this way-out place is so much fun that by the time you are ready to leave, the buses will have already stopped running.

Add: 387 Huanshi Road East; Tel: (20) 8358 2446; Business hours: 20:00-2:00

The Cave

This "cave" is not pitch dark, rather it is lit with colourful lights.

It would be easy to miss The Cave on Huanshi Road East, but if you go down alongside a wall covered with graffiti, you will find this ideal leisure time hangout featuring a restaurant, bar, billiards and table football facilities.

The food offered ranges from Chinese, Indonesian and Indian to Mexican, with prices similar to those in Hong Kong. All the sports facilities are free of charge.

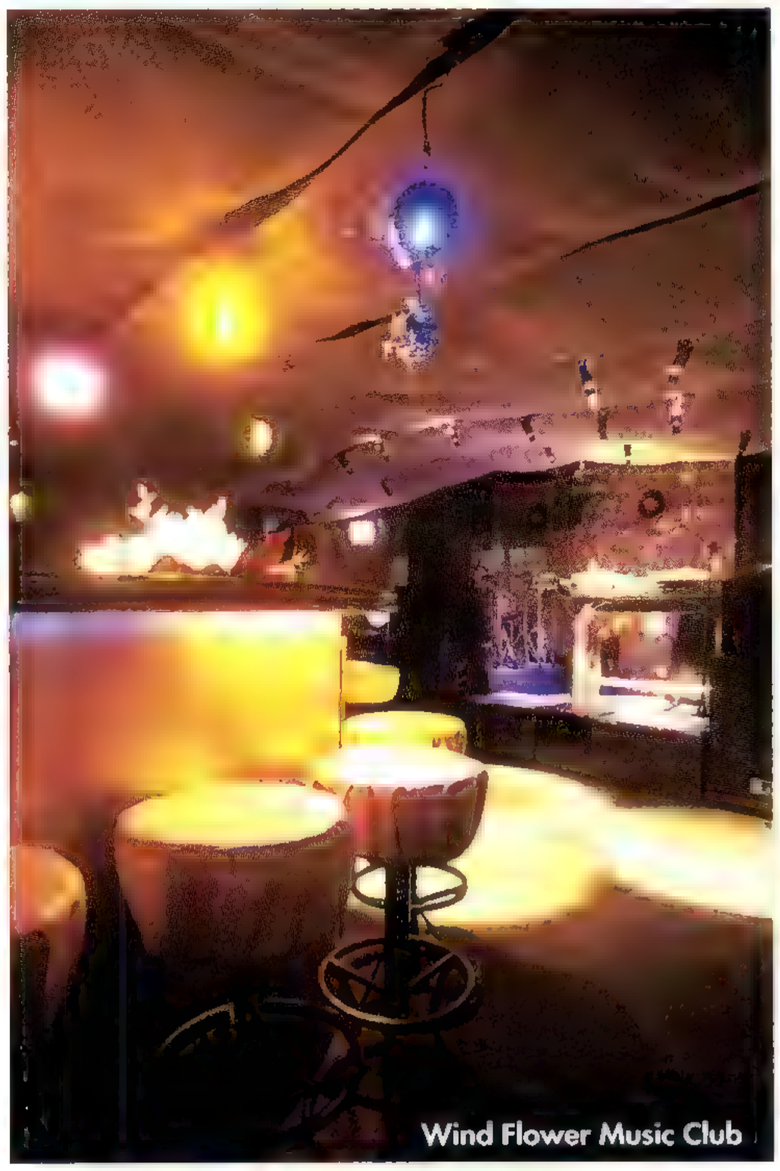
Add: East Building of Pearl River Mansion, 360 Huanshi Road East, Dongshan District; Tel: (20) 8386 3660; Business hours: 17:00-2:00

Panxi Restaurant

Crystal Cafe

Music & Coffee

Peace Road Bar

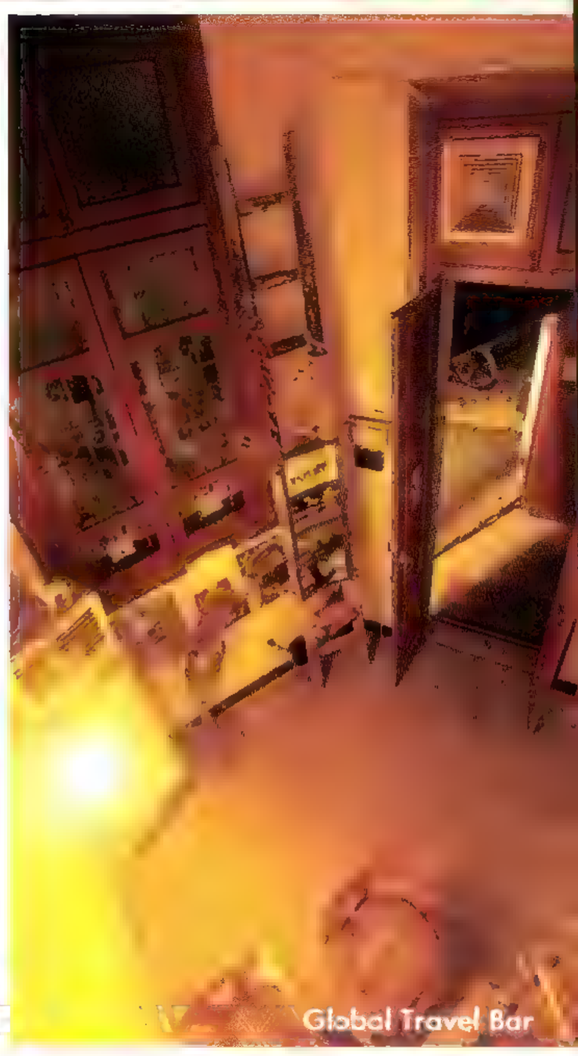

Wind Flower Music Club

The Cave

The Cave

Hard Rock Café

Oro Restaurant


Global Travel Bar

Music & Coffee

If you go shopping on Taojin Road, here's a great place to take a rest. The two-storey Music & Coffee offers both Chinese and Western food at middle range prices. A feature that deserves special mention is the partitioning on the second floor, which offers both privacy and enough room to relax. Each space is ideal for two or three close friends to chat or discuss business. The bar at one corner is also a good place to get together. In terms of both food and environment, it is certainly a place worth visiting.

Add: 98 Taojin Road South, Dongshan District;
Tel: (20) 8357 4041; Business hours: 8:00-3:00

Hard Rock Café

A foreign netizen once announced with great alarm: "I have just been to Guangzhou and to my great surprise I found a notice at the entrance of the Hard Rock Café announcing 'Drugs and Arms Permitted Inside!' How weird! The trouble is I didn't have my camera with me, so I couldn't take a picture of it. When I told people what I had seen, nobody believed me. Fellow netizens, can anybody please send me a picture if you happen to have photographed it?" Before long someone replied on the net, "The notice has nothing to do with Guangzhou. It is just a poster of the Hard Rock, which can be seen in all its outlets. So don't panic!"

Fridays and weekends are the busiest times at the Hard Rock. If you get safely past the daunting notice, you will come to a dining area filled with a holiday atmosphere. Foreign and local visitors each constitute half of the visitors while those eating and dancing are also equally split in number, but there is enough fun and laughter for all to share. During major Western holidays such as Christmas, the place is as crowded as its Hong Kong counterpart.

Add: Ground floor, China Hotel, Liuhua Road, Yuexiu District;
Tel: (20) 8666 6888; Business hours: 10:30-1:00 (Sunday to Thursday), 10:30-2:00 (Friday and Saturday)

Global Travel Bar

Located in a residential area, the Global Travel Bar appears simple but is in fact rather unique. The dimly lit first floor and the attic offer visitors the feeling of coming home combined with an even stronger sense of nostalgia.

Inside, both the lower and upper floors are filled with many young people, all sharing their travel experiences. Some are asking the questions while others try to be the first to answer. The discussion is so heated and involved, it is hard to tell who is the owner of the restaurant.

The walls are pasted with all kinds of tourism information, including messages, photos and even admission tickets. There are also shelves for notes and pictures of the tours made by the owners of the bar and visitors can help themselves to free copies.

I talked with Miss Li, one of the co-owners, and learned that the bar is run jointly by several travel and photography enthusiasts. Two years ago, she and several friends made a tour to Ngari in Tibet. Along the way they met other backpacker tourists and as they travelled, their ranks grew, amounting to more than a dozen by the time they completed the trip. The experience seemed to change their outlook on many things. Upon returning to Guangzhou, they met up from time to time to catch up and reminisce. Gradually realising how difficult it was to find a place to meet each time, they responded to a suggestion that they establish a bar of their own, for gathering and sharing experiences among them and with other tourists. After a year of preparation, they finally found a space in an old residential area where the rent was cheap. During the day, they do their own business and in the evening take turns to manage the place.

Since I myself am a tour lover, there seemed no end to our discussion. First there were only two of us and soon many others joined in, especially regular visitors who had just come back from a tour, and part-time tour guides who had got to know each other through the Internet. In short, those who love travel love to have more friends. That evening, I made quite a few new friends and when I next travel, I will have more companions.

Every Thursday evening, a free slide show is held and friends coming back fresh from a tour make presentations and share their experiences.

Since travel is the theme here, food and drink are really secondary, so the place provides just basic drinks and snacks.

Add: 190 Duobao Road, Yuexiu District;
Tel: (20) 8193 8261; Business hours: 20:00-2:00

Travel Bar

This is the first bar in Guangzhou with travel as its theme. Apart from several cute tables, there are also private rooms. On the upper floor, there are even better seats arranged on the balcony. The free slide show on every Wednesday always draws a packed house. The billboard in the bar is an interesting place where visitors can find the most recent information on tours. A variety of tourism magazines are also provided here.

Add: 410 Dezheng Road North, Yuexiu District;
Tel: (20) 8386 1641; Business hours: 16:00-2:00

Liuhua Teahouse

Photos & article by Chu Kit

New Tourist Attractions in Guangzhou

As this was not my first visit to Guangzhou, I was not so keen to follow the tour group for morning tea at Panxi Restaurant, to view the flowers at the Yuexiu Park, or to go shopping at the Upper and Lower Nine Streets. All I wanted on this occasion was to gain some fresh experiences of the place. So for several days, I opted for an educational feast of the arts on Ersha Island, a glimpse of the lifestyles in the former big mansions at Liwan, a tour of the world under the sea at the miraculous aquarium, and an exhilarating ride in a "space shuttle" to "outer space". By the time I stood on top of the Baiyun Hill, facing the newly completed bungee platform in the distance, I had come to the conclusion that there were certainly many different ways to see Guangzhou!

Guangdong Fine Art Gallery

Xinghai Concert Hall: A Haven for Music-lovers

On the refreshing and serene Ersha Island, I turned into Qingbo Road on its south side and saw in the distance the beautiful contours of the Xinghai Concert Hall, just like a swan about to take flight. Yet, in keeping with its function, the building also resembles an elegant piano. Perched on the bank of the Pearl River, it forms a harmonious whole with its tranquil surroundings. The Concert Hall is named after Xian Xingha', a noted Chinese musician and native of Guangdong. Completed in 1998, it held its debut performance on June 13 of that year to commemorate Xian Xinghai's birthday.

Being the performance season, the concert hall was open to the public for viewing only at specific times. I waited outside for a while before following a group of visitors inside. The main foyer was largely white in tone. The large French windows admitted the sunshine and gave the space a special sense of natural elegance. I took the stairs and went up to the second floor, where the soul of the building, a first-class international concert hall, was located.

A huge pipe organ of silvery white stands in the hall. Consisting of more than 4,000 pipes of different sizes and with a height of nine metres, it is said to be the largest of its kind in China. Its volume is powerful enough to match an entire orchestra. I looked around and found that the whole concert hall followed the design of an amphitheatre. It resembled a mountain valley with the spectators' seats neatly arranged from way up high and graduating downward to the focal point at the "bottom of the valley". The stage is big enough to accommodate a large-scale symphony orchestra of 200 musicians and a chorus of a further 200. Many noted Chinese and foreign musicians have performed here, including famous Chinese pianists Liu Shikun, Yin Chengzong and Kong Xiangdong, the BBC Scotland Philharmonic Orchestra, the Dance Pipe and String Troupe of the Vienna Opera House, and Li Yundi, who won first place at last year's Chopin International Piano Festival. When famous musicians perform, it is always packed to capacity.

The seats are worth mentioning. Each of the 1,400 plush seats costs as much as 4,000 yuan. They were especially ordered from Japan. They would remain soundless no matter how harshly a spectator might move in them. It is admirable that the management used its budget to create the best acoustics possible for its audiences. Sitting back in one of these chairs and looking down at tne bright stage floor, it is easy to imagine the joy of listening to a concert in this environment. I felt really proud for the residents of Guangzhou.

Apart from the main concert hall, the complex also has indoor music chambers, audio-visual rooms, a music book centre and a music-oriented cultural centre. During the tour, I was involuntarily drawn in by the strong atmosphere of music everywhere. As I walked out of the wondrous Concert Hall, I heard myself humming!

Admission for visit: 10 yuan; Add: 33 Qingbo Road, Ersha Island, Guangzhou; Transport: Take buses No. 12, 18, 89, 194, 248 or 277;
Tel: (20) 8735 3869, 8375 2222 ext 886;
Website: http://www.concerthall.com.cn
*During the summer, an outdoor concert is held every Saturday evening, free of charge.
*Movies are shown in the function hall.

Xinghai Concert Hall (by Huang Songhui)

Xinghai Concert Hall (by Chen Yat Nin)

Lijiang Pearl Opera House, Panyu

Lijiang Pearl Opera House, Panyu

A music fan should not miss the Lijiang Pearl Opera House in Dashi Town of Panyu, Guangzhou. Last year as I drove through Panyu, I saw in the distance a magnificent European-style building, the Lijiang Pearl Hotel. What I didn't know then was that right next to the hotel, another three-year project was well underway. The unusually impressive Lijiang Pearl Opera House was commissioned for a trial operation early this year.

The opera house has a floor space of 23,000 square metres with 44 luxurious boxes, seating for 1,200, and 43 Karaoke rooms. The interior decor and layout is of a very high standard. The stage is uniquely designed with five large and three small levels, two side elevators, one extension and revolving platform and one suspended movable platform. The theatre is complete with hi-tech acoustics, lighting, electrical and mechanical equipment. It must be an absolute joy to watch a performance here. Interestingly, all the designers and architects of the opera house are from Guangzhou!

Add: 111 Yingbin Road, North of Beishaxi Bridge, Dashi Town, Panyu District; Tel: (20) 8458 2288;
Transport: Take Bus No. 129 from Guangzhou city centre and you will arrive in 15 minutes.
Opening hours: First show: 18:00-19:00 (for tourist groups), second show: 20:45-23:00 (open for the public)
Website: http://www.baigonghotel.com
E-mail: lijiang@baigonghotel.com

Guangdong Fine Art Gallery: Dedicated to Fostering Art

When I entered the Guangdong Fine Art Gallery, I felt as if I had entered a great palace of art. Gone completely was the image of old-fashioned rigidity and monotony one normally

Ocean World (by Chan Yat Nin)

meets when visiting galleries. In the open and bright space, the gentle lighting combines harmoniously with the adequate natural light admitted through the glass windows. On the left side of the main hall was a bronze statue by the British sculptor Henry Moore, which corresponded with the huge poster on the wall announcing "Moore in China". In co-operation with the British Embassy to China and the British Council of Culture, the gallery was hosting an exhibition of Moore's works. Under the yellowish light, the bronze works sent out gentle rays. Moore loved to portray the theme of family and here many works on show were familiar to visitors, including the gentle "Mother and Son", "Sleeping Mother and Baby" and "Family", which spoke of love. The rich Western artistic atmosphere was accentuated by the environment, making it easy to forget that this was a city in South China.

It was evident that the authorities of the gallery took pains to promote exchanges between Chinese and Western art. In the outdoor area, a modern Chinese sculpture exhibition entitled "A Dialogue with Moore" was going on. Works by 33 contemporary Chinese sculptors were on display on the lawn, caressed by the sunshine and a gentle breeze. Here art was totally united with nature.

Paintings and ceramics are permanent residents here at the gallery. On display were the traditional paintings of the Lingnan School by Huang Shaoqiang and rather abstract oils by Zhu Deqin. What attracted me most was a big group of multi-coloured boulders in the ceramic hall. The simple but direct use of colour seemed to be the work of children, giving the works a strong sense of youthfulness.

Finally, I bought a copy of *Introduction to Art* at the gallery's bookstore. I sat down in the west hall and began to nurture my artistic sensibilities over a cup of coffee.

Add: 38 Yanyu Road, Ersha Island;
Tel: (20) 8735 1468, 8735 1336; Admission: 20 yuan;
Opening hours: 9:00-17:00 (closed on Mondays);
Transport: Buses No. 12, 18, 89, 194, 248 or 277.
Website: http://www.gdart.com (Chinese only)

Xiguan Folklore Museum: In Honour of the Glorious Past

One drizzly afternoon, I arrived at the Xiguan Folklore Museum on West Longjin Road, Liwan District, in search of the footprints left by prominent families in Xiguan.

Like in many other big cities, the large mansions and luxurious houses occupied by prominent families in history are rapidly disappearing due to increasing modernisation in urban areas. What is left today is no more than a few scattered and dilapidated houses. In order to preserve traditional architecture and the culture associated with it, the city authorities had this building imitating past mansions completed and opened to the public in September last year.

As you go through the side door of the Liwan Museum, the grey-brick and green-tile archway of the Xiguan Folklore Museum comes into view. The interior is mostly furnished with

elegant Ming or Qing furniture, but one particular leather sofa with an openwork wooden frame is definitely of Western design, indicating that Western culture had already entered the homes of Xiguan people by the late Qing period.

The first house was for the head of the family. Models of a traditional newly wed couple and their maid occupy the room. The dining hall behind is practically equipped, with such items as a chicken feather duster, cups, bowls and brass hand-warmers. A staircase on the side leads to the second floor, which houses a series of photos of family life in the past. The elegantly seated Xiguan lady and official-looking master in one photo did actually exist in real life. The woman has her feet bound, her hands resting on her lap in a typically refined pose. Nearby is the daughter's private room, in which a pair of embroidered shoes stands in front of the bed. The bedding and quilt are neatly arranged, as if waiting for the return of the owner.

Suddenly a strange idea came to mind: what would happen if, once the tourists all left, the images in the photos were to come to life and continue the unfinished story in the house? What if I were to hide myself and venture a sudden face-to-face encounter with them? As my fantasies drifted, I was already out of the house and pacing the road in the rain.

Add: Inside the Liwan Museum, 84 Fengyuan Street North, Longjin Road North;
Tel: (20) 8195 9225, 8193 9917;
Admission: 5 yuan; Opening hours: 8:30-17:30;
Transport: Take buses No. 2, 8, 25, 34, 55 and 66 and get off at Bantang stop, or take subway and alight at Changshou Road.

Ocean World: Walking the Seabed in an Aquarium

With a splash, a shadow shot out of the water and into the air, eliciting thunderous applause and cheers from the audience. The "Flying Man" was the finale at the aquarium. When the performer landed in the water, two grey dolphins unexpectedly rose out of the water with the most charming expressions on their faces.

Thanks to the advice of friends, I found that the old Guangzhou Zoo had a brand new aquarium added to its list of attractions. I went there one sunny afternoon. As I stepped inside the area of the aquarium, I found myself in a world of deep blue, for all the places were painted the colour of the sea. The Ocean Theatre under a white canopy on the right hand side is a source of laughter and applause. Seven dolphins and two sea lions from the United States and Japan are performing drawing, singing, dancing, balancing a ball, carrying a man and pulling a boat. Their cute gestures bring great fun for visitors. In the Sea Lion Garden on the opposite side, 12 sea lions swim in a leisurely fashion, yawning and stretching their fat bodies lazily, much to the amusement of the spectators. The heaviest sea lion weighs more than 500 kilograms.

Further ahead is the entrance to the main attraction, the Seabed World. An elevator carries visitors down to the bottom of the sea where they can view, through the transparent partition, schools of fish swarming over from all directions. Here, beautiful corals sway thousands of arms in dazzling colours. Coming off the elevator, the 10-metre-deep seabed view is even more enthralling. Creatures with the strangest looks and fantastic colours, some massive in size, amazed the spectators. In the theme tank and rare species tank, there are fiery shells, stonefish, mermaid shrimps, multi-colour morays and sea roses. Rare ocean plants are equally interesting. The aquarium also has an imitation freshwater world, a tropical rain forest, and coastal rocks to demonstrate the life and habitat of sea animals and plants. The most unforgettable part is the Hall of Sharks where in a 900-cubic-metre tank, leopard sharks, nurse sharks, black fin sharks, white fin sharks and many other kinds play out the most ferocious scene as they hunt for food. Near the exit, a world of ice and snow presents itself.

Xiguan Folklore Museum

Fantastic Space Park (by Su Langzhi)

This is the Penguin Hall. Having never seen penguins before, I finally had the thrill of coming within close range of them. More than 20 charming Hamburg penguins from Peru were behaving like naughty kids, swimming in the water and playing on the bank. I learned that these penguins belonged to a species under first-class protection in the world.

I left the aquarium a little puzzled: how come penguins from South America were living in a world of ice and snow? And how come natives of Peru were called Hamburg penguins? To be able to see them was a great treat anyway!

Add: Inside Guangzhou Zoo, 120 Xianlie Road Central; Admission: 100 yuan (including the zoo entry); Opening hours: 9:00-18:00; Transport: Buses No. 6, 11, 16, 22A, 33, 72 and 122;
Website: http://www.gzoceanworld.com (Chinese only)

Fantastic Space Park: A Trip Into Outer Space

Ever since childhood, I have dreamed of going to the moon. When I grew up, I often looked at the starry sky with a romantic eye and the universe always took me on wild drifting reveries. Pandering to my great curiosity for outer space, I decided to visit the Fantastic Space Park.

In front of the gate, the statue of Wan Hu, the ancient pioneer of China's missile development, greets visitors. Several hundred years ago during the Ming Dynasty, Wan experimented with the concept of launching missiles by tying dynamite to his own body and died in the incident.

The 220,000-square-metre Fantastic Space Park embraces a number of exhibition halls. The Space Science Introduction Hall is an ideal classroom for space science enthusiasts. The exhibits introduce the development of China's space science as well as major space technologies in Western countries. Visitors can also put their learning into action here. The missile launching ground situated halfway up a hill is very popular. A visitor can spend 40 yuan on a model missile to place on the launching platform, press the button and launch it after a five-second countdown. One can watch the missile shooting into the sky and receive a "space man" that gently lands on the ground.

In the Space Travel Hall, people can experience a breathtaking trip on a rocky spacecraft to see the nine great planets. Though the explosion of sunspots, attack of meteorites and collision of stars encountered on the way cause great tension, the mysterious beauty of space still makes one reluctant to return. Needless to say, there is always a long queue outside this hall. In the Volcano and Earthquake Hall, people can personally experience simulated eruptions of volcanoes and earthquakes as well as watch a 360-panorama film featuring Hawaiian scenery.

Though few people have the opportunity to really experience space travel, to get the feel of a fantastic journey into outer space here is a pretty good substitute.

Add: Daguan Road, Tianhe Dongpu; Tel: (20) 82306028, 8230 8861; Admission: 80 yuan; Opening hours: 9:00-17:00; Transport: Buses No. 224, 548 and 549.
*Most of the exhibition halls have performances. You're advised to pay attention to the programme schedule to make the most of your visit.

Baiyun Hill Extreme Sports Centre: Be a Brave Chinese!

Though bungee jumping, grass skiing and cross-country skiing are no longer out-of-the-ordinary sports activities, to try them at the beautiful Baiyun Hill Sports Centre will undoubtedly raise your blood pressure and increase your heartbeat.

A tourist bus takes you halfway up the mountain to the Extreme Sports Centre. Extreme sports have become popular in China in recent years, but the centre at Guangzhou is the first of its kind in the country.

Baiyun Hill Extreme Sports Centre

Walking along the mountain path flanked with lush grass and shrubs, you will see the zigzagging silvery white luge tracks and the rolling grass-ski ground, and eventually come to the bungee jumping platform at the end. On the platform is a huge red banner with characters stuck on it, reading, "Be a brave Chinese!"

According to the staff, the luge tracks were the first project to be built here. With a total length of 1,400 metres, the tracks fork to the left and right, and consist of seven large and five small bends. Riding a six-wheel car down at high speed while appreciating the natural beauty of the mountain scenery certainly gives you the feeling of being immersed in nature. Further ahead, the grass-ski ground is built 135 metres above sea level on a natural mountain slope. Participants have a choice of riding a grass-sled or using the special boots for skiing down the slope. Bungee jumping, popular among young people, is the most recent addition to the sports centre. People have to pass a medical check-up to qualify for the sport. Then they stand on a 42-metre-high platform to take their "lethal leap". The leap from the platform at a speed of 50 to 60 kilometres an hour is extremely exhilarating, but this is not all of the game. Just as you almost reach the ground, you bounce back high into the air, and fall and rise four or five times in five seconds. It turns into the most terrifying, most exciting, the longest and most unforgettable moment of your life.

I was both thrilled and daunted by the description and was about to take the plunge when a downpour descended. For safety reasons, I had to return, but I am fully prepared to have a go and be a real brave Chinese next time.

Add: The Baiyun Hill Scenic Area; Tel: (20) 8770 6871 ext 2272; Costs: Bungee jumping: 120 yuan, Grass skiing: 60 yuan/hour, Luge: 30 yuan/return trip; Opening hours: 9:00-17:00; Transport: Take Bus No. 24 to Baiyun Hill, and transfer to the tourist bus (8 yuan, including park admission).

Photos & article by Tsang Po Ki

Visiting Places of Historical Interest via the Subway

Route 1 of Guangzhou's underground railway system began its formal service on June 28, 1999. It was the largest municipal construction project since the city had come into being. It has not only greatly eased traffic strain and chaos, but also demonstrates the great efforts Guangzhou has made in the city's development. The subway is 18.48 km long and has 16 stops. It starts at Xilang of Fangcun District, goes through the Pearl River tunnel and enters the old part of the city, then follows Zhongshan Road towards the east and finally reaches the Guangzhou East Railway Station.

Along the route, there are many places of historic interest and popular scenic spots. To ride a clean, fast and modern train, avoiding buses that send up clouds of dust on crowded streets, has now become a new way of travelling in Guangzhou.

Chen Clan Temple Station

Guangdong Folk Crafts Museum

This museum is housed in the Chen Clan Temple, a gorgeous compound with houses decorated with sculptures and carvings of stone, clay, and brick, in the images of animals, human figurines, flowers, buildings, and more. The temple was first built in 1894 in the Qing Dynasty, with donations from the Chen clan members in 72 counties of Guangdong Province. When examinations were held to choose people for the civil service, all the scholars taking part in the exams surnamed Chen would stay here. Therefore it was known as the Chen Clan Academy. In 1957, the local government decided to establish a museum here to enable people to see such Guangdong folk crafts as pottery, coloured porcelain and ivory carvings.

Guangzhou Folk Crafts Museum

Museum of the Mausoleum of Nanyue King (by Chan Yat Nin)

Stone carvings of the Chen Clan Temple (by Shi Baoxiu)

An entrance of the subway (by Dianna Lau)

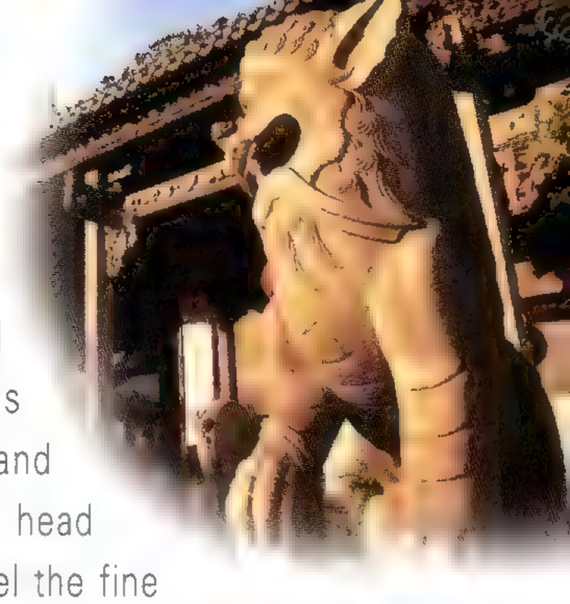
A visit to the museum is easy. The subway takes you to the stop as conveniently as a taxi. Alighting at the Chen Clan Temple Station, it takes only two minutes to walk to the museum. And the atmosphere of the place is wonderful. I always believe that atmosphere is very important for a place involved in arts and handicrafts. No matter how wonderful the exhibits might be, if the atmosphere is not right, they can hardly raise their viewers' interest.

It is a pleasant experience to walk along the tranquil corridor, smelling the fragrance of trees and plants. Entering the museum's antique halls, you don't have to be an artist or expert on Guangdong folk crafts; as long as you love things fine and exquisite, you would find great enjoyment here.

The Zhanquan Pottery Exhibition takes up a large space. His own works, big and small, and his collection are displayed either in glass cases or in the open. Be it a vase, a basin, a bowl, a cup, a pot or a jar, every piece is rich and harmonious in colour.

The Guangdong Coloured Porcelain Exhibition is equally attractive. A number of exhibits are painted with theme pictures, such as "Going to a Rural Fair", "Returning Home After Graduation", and "Sending Books to A Mountain Village". Others are painted with peacocks, butterflies or animals. Tne brushstrokes are highly refined, and the colours splendid, fully demonstrating the artists' rich imagination and outstanding skills.

In the third hall, there are exhibitions displaying artistic carvings. Among the exhibits of the Guangdong Ivory Carvings, two items are the most eye-catching — the delicate *Longevity Lamp* and the *Basket of Happiness, Fortune and Longevity*, on which are meticulously carved light clouds, thin petals, and figures with delicate facial features, as well as streaming dresses and skirts, and exquisite head dresses. One can feel the fine texture by just looking at them. An engraved ivory ball of many layers and a tiny carving on a piece of ivory as small as a grain of rice also amaze the visitors. To many of them, it is simply incredible to carve a pattern with such fine strokes on the hard surface of ivory. Through these works, we see the tenacity and will-power of those artisans who created them. Their endless pursuit of excellence is both beautiful and touching.



Tourists in organised groups usually have little time to enjoy the exhibits. It is really a big loss for tnem.

Add: 34 Enping Lane, Zhongshan Road 7
Tel: (20) 8161 [illegible] Admission: 10 yuan
Opening hours: 8:30-17:30
Notes:
1. Please allow 1.5 to 2 hours to [illegible]
2. Other exhibitions scheduled in this year:
June 1-December: Shiwan Folk Pottery Art Exhibition; June 26-September 26: Guangdong Contemporary Lacquer Paintings; July: Guangdong Folk Building Components of the Qing Dynasty

Ximenkou Station

Guangxiao Temple

If you continue your subway journey and get off at Ximenkou Station, you would come to Guangxiao Temple after walking for five minutes along Guangxiao Road. Guangxiao Temple, the oldest temple in Guangzhou, was first built in 397, during the Eastern Jin Dynasty.

The day I visited happened to be a festival day, so it was packed with local residents who came to offer joss sticks. Outside the entrance to the temple, stalls sold candles, incenses and paper-made windmills and so on. It was full of commotion. Amidst the sound of hawking and bargaining, I entered the temple in a herd, and found myself engulfed in hazy smoke.

In its by-gone days, many saintly monks came from far away places to preach in this temple. Among them were two high monks from Kashmir and India respectively, during the period from 401 to 420. This indicates that

Stalls outside the Guangxiao Temple

Guangzhou Museum

Guangxiao Temple (by Shi Baoxin)

Guangzhou Museum (by Peng Zhen'ge)

Guangzhou Museum

the temple was the most important place for religious exchanges in the early days of Guangzhou. Its main structures include the Hall of Sakyamuni, the Sixth Patriarch Hall and the Reclining Buddha Hall. The Hall of Sakyamuni, with a pair of stone carvings at its façade, was an original structure from the East Jin Dynasty, which has gone through many renovations.

When I got to the rear of the temple, I saw people milling around the Western Iron Pagoda. The three-layer pagoda is similar in shape to the seven-layer Eastern Iron Pagoda. On each layer are cast many iron Buddhist statues. As the former was built in 963, four years earlier than the latter, it is treasured more by worshippers, who all reach out to touch it as they circle it, hoping to be blessed by the Buddha.

In front of the Hall of the Sixth Patriarch lies another historic structure, a seven-layer octagonal pagoda surrounded by a stone balustrade. According to historical records, the Sixth Patriarch, Hui Neng's hair was housed in it after he was tonsured in 676 in the Tang Dynasty. Many tourists cast coins or crumpled bank notes into the shrines on each layer of the pagoda. Since the openings of the shrines were very small, coins and bank notes mostly fell onto the ground within the balustrade.

Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall

If you get off at The Park Front Station, head northward past the People's Park and the municipal government building, you will reach the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall on Dongfeng Road Central.

Dr. Sun Yat-sen was a native of Zhongshan County of Guangdong Province. He studied in the United States and Hong Kong, and travelled a lot around the world, to mobilise the Chinese revolution to overthrow the Qing Dynasty. Dr. Sun was elected president of the provisional government in Guangzhou in the early 1920s and left his footprints in the city, with many memorable activities and moving stories. Designed by Lu Yanzhi, the memorial hall was built in 1931 in commemoration of Dr. Sun.

It is an octagonal structure in the architectural style of the Chinese palace. The red pillars, the double-eave, multi-ridge roof, the pinnacle with its eight turned-up corners, the blue glazed tiles and striking patterns carved on the caissons beneath the eaves al. feature a strong Chinese architectural style. In front of the hall was a neat flowerbed, in which stands a bronze statue of Dr. Sun Yat-sen. It is, like the hall itself, very solid. The grandeur of the hall does not seem to stem from the structure alone, but also seems to come from the bearing of this great man.

The hall is not only a place of historical interest, but also serves as a venue for important meetings and performances, particularly since the tremendous refurbishment funded by the government in

come to a three-storey building. Outside the gate on the third floor is a black dome embedded in the ground. This is the original site of the vault of the ancient mausoleum. In 1983, to make way for a construction project, a 17-metre-high chunk of Xianggang Mountain was levelled. This led to the discovery of this Han-dynasty stone-built mausoleum from 2,000 years ago, which stunned archaeological circles both in China and abroad. From the tomb, well preserved burial objects such as jade ware, bronzes, gold and silver artefacts and pottery of high archaeological value were unearthed.

The mausoleum is divided into seven chambers. The declining passage extends right to the chamber in which the deceased host lies in a coffin. When excavated, the body was dressed in a coat made with pieces of jade linked together with gold threads. Ten swords inlaid with jade were found lying on each side. Around the body lay a host of jade wares, including a box, belt clasp, cups and pendants. Who was the host of the enormous mausoleum with so many treasures? Amidst the jade coat, archaeologists found several gold and jade seals. One was shaped in the image of a dragon, the size of a button, with four characters, meaning "Seal of King Wendi". Another was shaped like a tortoise, again the size of a button, with the two characters "Tai Zi". Yet another was a jade seal with the characters "Zhao Mei". Based on the seals and other objects unearthed here, tne host was identified as King Zhao Mei, the second ruler of the Nanyue Kingdom (reigning 137-122 B.C.) during the Western Han Dynasty.

On each side of the principal burial chamber is a wing chamber. The east chamber contains the coffins of Zhao Mei's four wives, from which some jade wares, bronze mirrors and clothes were found. Three sets of bronze chime bells, two sets of stone percussion instruments, some zithers, fiddles, bronze drinking vessels, and articles for parties were discovered in this wing chamber. The western chamber, believed to be a kind of warehouse, is where seven servants, plus some oxen, sheep and pigs were buried as sacrifices. Chariots, armour, jade wares, curios, silk and hemp fabrics were also excavated here. In a storage room in the back, there are cooking utensils made of bronze, iron and pottery.

Behind the mausoleum stand three pyramid structures, which are the main buildings of the museum. Relics unearthed are exhibited in 21 sections over five exhibition halls on two floors. With the mausoleum so close, it feels as if you are on the spot excavating with the archaeologists at the foot of the Xianggang Hill. It was so impressive that I couldn't help wondering why such a large amount of funerary objects were buried along with the deceased?

Museum of the Mausoleum of Nanyue King

Guangzhou Museum of Modern History

Martyrs' Cemetery (by Chan Yat Nin)

Add: 867 Jiefang Road North; Tel: (20) 8666 4920; Admission: 12 yuan; Opening hours: 9:30-17:30 (no admittance after 16:45)

Notes:

1. The whole tour probably requires three hours. If your time is limited, you might concentrate on the original site of the mausoleum in the protected area and the main exhibition hall.
2. Other exhibitions scheduled from June to December:
   June-mid-October: Qing Court Packaging Art Exhibition of the Palace Museum, Show of Celadon Housed in Zhejiang Provincial Museums; November-March 2002: Shaanxi Bronze Wares of Shang and Zhou Dynasties.

Guangzhou Museum of Modern History

Right outside the subway station, the eight golden characters meaning "Cemetery of Martyrs of the Guangzhou Uprising" made on the basis of the calligraphy of the late Premier Zhou Enlai instantly caught my attention. This was one of the places I had wanted to visit. The vast graveyard, renovated in 1957, covers an area of 260,000 square metres. The entrance to the cemetery is wide enough to accommodate four cars at once. The magnificence of the cemetery well indicates the high esteem the martyrs had earned from the government and people of Guangzhou. As there were not many tourists, the cemetery was empty and tranquil, seemingly more spacious. At the ticket booth, I asked a woman attendant about the location of the Guangzhou Museum of Modern History. While collecting the admission fee, she pointed to one side and said, "Just over there. Follow that path and you can't miss it."

So I followed a granite road and found the path. Sure enough, there stood a magnificent Western-style building by a small pond. The museum was established in the same year that the cemetery was renovated. It used to be the Consultancy Office in the late Qing Dynasty. It was here that Sun Yat-sen was sworn in as the provisional president of the

1998, which greatly improved the facilities in this hall. Look around inside the auditorium, and you won't find a single pillar. Several thousand seats in red laid on the two sloping floors give each member of the audience a direct and comfortable view of the stage. The stage is broad, with state-of-the-art equipment for lighting and acoustics. No wonder it is so popular among performing arts circles. When I visited the hall, a group of young artists happened to be rehearsing a drama.

Near the northwest entrance to the hall stands the Sun Yat-sen Memorial Museum. In this two-storey building, the whole life of Sun Yat-sen is displayed through photos and exhibits. The tools he used when practising medicine, plus documents and books he wrote while he was engaged in revolution, are all displayed here.

Add: 259 Dongfeng Road Central; Tel: (20) 8355 2030;
Admission: 10 yuan; Opening hours: 8:00-17:00
Note: The tour requires about one hour.

Guangzhou Museum

Guangzhou Museum is situated in Yuexiu Park on Yingyuan Road, which can be reached from the northwest gate of Dr. Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall. To prepare your mind for the historical ambience of the museum, take the time to savour the thick foliage and fragrant flowers as you walk along this road.

Zhenhai Tower, the building that houses the museum, was built by a Ming-dynasty general Zhu Liangzhu in 1380, during the expansion of Guangzhou. It has stood up against the elements for more than 600 years and still remains intact. It was converted into a museum in 1929. In the centre of the ground floor stands a sculpture of five sheep. Legend has it that five immortals, each holding a rice ear and riding a sheep, descended on Guangzhou. They gave blessings to the city, hoping the people there would reap harvests of all five crops and never suffer from famine. This is how Guangzhou's other name, Yangcheng (City of Sheep), came into being. Displayed on both sides of the exhibition hall are relics excavated from the ruins of the South Yue Palace and a shipyard of the Qin Dynasty. In history, Guangzhou used to be the capital of South Yue Kingdom, South Han Kingdom and South Ming Kingdom respectively. It also served as the starting point of the ancient Silk Road on the Sea. All of these facts are to be found in the exhibits.

If you mount the broad flight of steps, you will come to the first floor where you may learn the history of Guangzhou from the Han to the Yuan dynasties. At that time, Guangzhou was a very important port of China. Trade was brisk through this port. Crate after crate of pottery was shipped onto boats here and transported to the outside world. On display are various pieces of pottery, glazed pottery and porcelain retrieved from the sea. They would have been scattered all over the world if boats carrying them had not capsized. Displayed on the upper floor are clocks, ivory carvings and furniture, all made in Guangzhou. Judging from the variety and quality of the objects on display, the arts and crafts of Guangzhou at that time must have been highly developed. The large clock face, broken pieces of missionaries' tombstones, a *Bible*, a salad bowl, a pair of spectacles are just some of the items that bear witness to the cultural exchange between China and foreign countries.

By the time of late Qing and the early Republic, brands like *Li Zhan Ji*, *Hei Mei* and *Li Yu Xing* had become well known to the residents of Guangzhou. A blackened sewing machine, a punch-card machine and an old fashioned fan are found among the exhibits. Things like megaphones, radios, a shoulder-pole with two baskets, a sedan chair seen only in films or TV shows are all displayed here. They really seem to have a life of their own. What caught my eye was a deep freezer resembling a wooden trunk. If it were not for the attendant who stood beside it, I would have opened it to see what it was like inside.

The best part of the museum in my opinion is the Guangdong Folk Art occupying the top floor. Exhibited here is a superb screen inlaid with pieces of jade and some exquisite jade carvings. I would have loved to have any single piece of them to display at home. But on second thoughts, how could modern furniture set off the beauty of such ancient treasures? They belonged unequivocally to traditional residences.

Add: Zhenhai Tower, Yuexiu Park; Tel: (20) 8355 2355;
Admission: 10 yuan for Yuexiu Park, 6 yuan for the museum; Opening hours: 9:00-17:30 (no admittance after 17:00)
Notes:

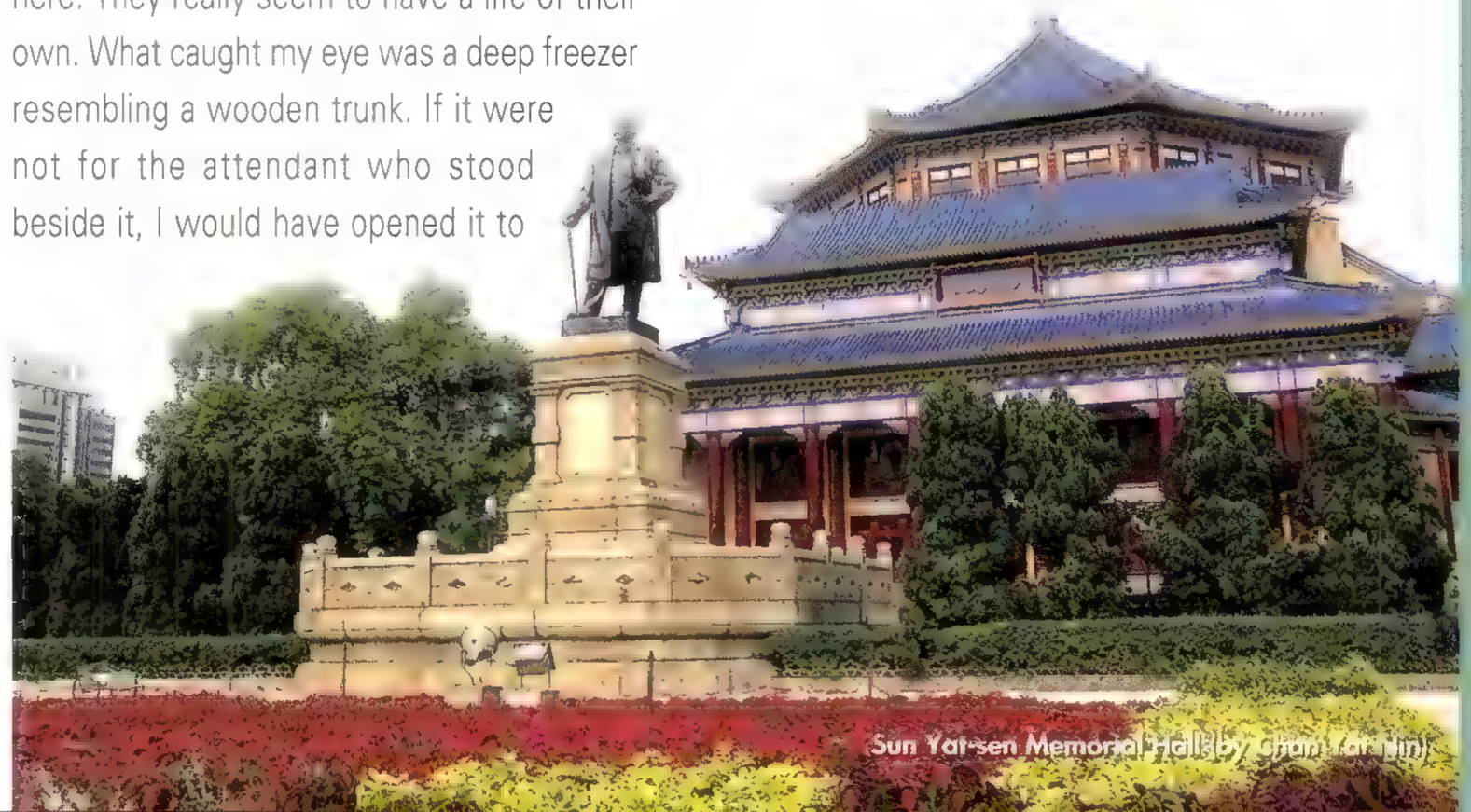
. The tour takes around two hours.
. Sanyuan Palace, the most ancient Taoist temple in Guangzhou, is located on Yingyuan Road, near the southern entrance of Yuexiu Park.

3. Other exhibitions scheduled in this museum till October this year:
June: Guangdong Shixing County Folk Art Exhibition; July: Pencil Sharpener Exhibition, Huang Mendie Paper-cut Show; August: Emblems Exhibition, Match Box Picture Show; October: Exhibition of the Best Relics Housed in Guangzhou Museum.

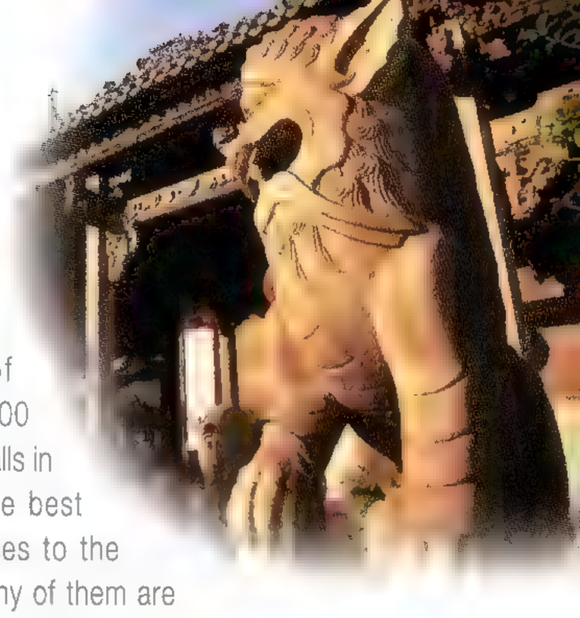
Museum of the Mausoleum of Nanyue King

Right out of the main entrance to Yuexin Park is North Jiefang Road. A few minutes' walk would take you to Xianggang Hill where the Western Han-dynasty Mausoleum of Nanyue King is located. As a museum, it is the youngest among all museums in Guangzhou, which by no means reflects its true significance.

Walk round the red sandstone bas-relief wall at the front of the museum, and you



Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall by Chan Kai Nin



Republic of China. It was a grey, two-storey building with four huge columns. There were no garish window frames, nor any bas-relief on its façade. There was an air of solemnity and grandeur about it. After all, this building housed a century of Guangzhou's history, most of which was concerned with revolution.

As soon as I came into the main entrance, I saw a horizontal board hanging on the ceiling with four characters meaning "An Eternally Secure Home". As I turned round, I caught sight of a berth intended for smoking opium. Despite the glass dividing wall, I felt as if I had been assaulted by a pungent smell of decadency and corruption. The prelude of the exhibition was the Opium War of 1841. The history of a century of Guangzhou was unfolded in such aspects as politics, economy and culture through relics displayed in immaculate exhibition cases.

There's too much to relate in detail here about such a huge amount of exhibits of weaponry, letters and documents, books, daily necessities.... All I can say is that in viewing those exhibits, I seemed to be personally experiencing the Opium War, the Heavenly Kingdom of Peace led by Hong Xiuquan, the Reform led by Kang Youwei, the democratic revolution headed by Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the workers' uprising, and the founding of the People's Republic of China.

When I came out of the museum, the overcast sky seemed to reflect my heavy heart after this visit. In the cemetery, some local residents were chattering, practising Taiji boxing, and playing ball games. I was the only one gazing at the cold monument, lost in thought.

Add: Cemetery of the Martyrs of the Guangzhou Uprising; Tel: (20) 8382 5846; Admission: 3 yuan for cemetery park, 5 yuan for museum; Opening hours: 9:00-16:30 (no admittance after 16:00); closed on Mondays.

Additional Information

Peasants' Movement Institute Station

In the vicinity of this station are the Guangdong Provincial Museum, Lu Xun Memorial Museum, and the former site of the Guangzhou Peasants' Movement School.

Guangdong Provincial Museum

Some 140,000 items of historical relics and 100,000 books are exhibited in five halls in this museum. They are the best possible historical witnesses to the history of the province. Many of them are rated as first class national relics. If you are interested in the history of Guangdong, you need to put aside one day for a visit to this museum.

Lu Xun Memorial Museum

Adjacent to Guangdong Provincial Museum, this is also the place where the First Congress of the Kuomintang was convened. In the exhibition hall on the second floor of the building, you may see 10,000 pieces of Lu Xun's manuscripts, photos, documents and books. It is a treasure trove for Lu Xun enthusiasts.

Add: 215 Wenming Road, 10-15 minutes' walk from the subway station; Tel: (20) 8383 2195; Admission: 8 yuan for the site, 2 yuan for Lu Xun Memorial Museum; Opening hours: 9:00-17:00 (closed on Mondays)

Former Site of Guangzhou Peasants' Movement Institute

The Guangzhou Peasants' Movement Institute was a centre to train cadres for the peasants' movement, which trained six groups of people during the period from 1924 to 1926. This was the site where the last group was trained in this antique-looking building.

Note: To visit a particular exhibition, it's better to call the museum before you set out, as the schedule may change.

Guangzhou has been an ancient metropolitan city in south China since the Qin and Han dynasties. It is known as "a mountain of gold, a sea of pearls, an imperial warehouse in the south".

In the period of Wu (222-280), Jin (265-420) and the Southern Dynasties (420-589), Guangzhou was a trade centre with all kinds of commodities.

In the Yuan Dynasty (1206-1368), Guangzhou was an international commercial port.

In the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), Guangzhou became the only port for foreign trade in China.

In the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), Guangzhou remained the only port for foreign trade and conducted all of China's foreign trade.

Today, Guangzhou is an important commodity collection and distribution centre in South China. The city's total turnover of social commodity retail sales ranks the third in China after Beijing and Shanghai.

Obviously, Guangzhou is a paradise for shopping. It is highly likely you will burn a hole in your pocket if you are not careful.

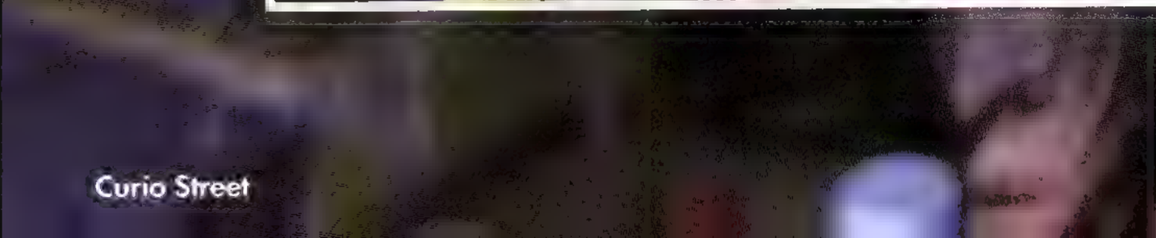
Photos by Shi Baoxiu and Dianna Lau
Article by Dianna Lau

Burn a Hole in Your Pocket – Shopping in Guangzhou

Qingping H[illegible] Medicine Centre

Yi Pah Store

Yiwan Plaza


Curio Street

Beijing Road

Beijing Road is the oldest business centre in Guangzhou. The pedestrian area of this centre covers Zhongshan Road No. 4, No. 5, Xihu Road, Jiaoyu Road and Yushan Market. It boasts 500 stores, including the Guangzhou Department Store, one of the 10 largest department stores in China, New Da Sun Company, Xinhua Bookstore and the night street fair at Xihu Road. Ginza, popular with young people, is always busy. It sells fashionable clothes and provides services like beauty parlours and manicures, a fairly new trade. Once a customer has chosen a hair decoration here, he or she can enjoy a totally new style of haircut on the spot and free of charge. This is something quite unheard of — and the customer needs to be very courageous.

Transport: Buses No. 1, 64, 125 and 182 have stops at Beijing Road. Get off at the Park Front Station and walk from there, if take subway.

Upper and Lower Nine Roads

This is another pedestrian road chock-a-block with numerous stores. It features Guangzhou's arcade-houses, catering culture, tourism and shopping. The Wing On Department Store, Liwan Plaza, Guangzhou Medicinal Herbal Centre, Taotaoju Restaurant, Guangzhou Restaurant, Lianxianglou Restaurant, Curio Street, are all here.

Transport: Take buses No. 4, 8, 38 or 61 and get off at the Upper and Lower Nine Roads, or take subway and get off at the Changshou Road Station.

Teem Plaza

Located on Tianhe Road and built in 1996, it has a floor space of 160,000 square metres. It contains two large department stores, namely, Tianmao and Jusco, and about 300 franchised stores. There are also restaurants providing both Chinese and Western food, a cinema, a skating rink and beauty parlours. In 1998, it was awarded ISO9002 quality certificate. It is very much like the modern shopping malls in Hong Kong.

Transport: Take buses No. 22, 33, 42 or 89 and get off at the stop of Teem Plaza, or take subway and get off at Tiyu Road West Station.

Guangzhou Book Shopping Centre

Located on Tianhe Road (opposite the Teem Plaza), it is a 10-storey building built on an area of 5,475 square metres. Shaped like an open book, it shouldn't be missed by those who love books. Some 80,000 titles are available here. It takes at least half a day to have a look around here.

Transport: Take buses No. 22, 33, 42 or 89 and get off at the Teem Plaza stop, or take subway and get off at Tiyu Road West Station. Business hours: 9:30-21:30

The Night Street Fair at Xihu Road

Located at Xihu Road (beside Beijing Road), it is the earliest night market opened in Guangzhou. In appearance, it is similar to the Women's Street or Temple Street in Hong Kong. When dusk falls, lights are on and the street fair begins its business. People come and go, buying all sorts of daily necessities, clothes, food, etc. What seem most interesting are the stalls selling wedding dresses. It is dazzlingly gorgeous and colourful.

Transport: Take buses No. 1, 64, 125 or 182 and get off at the Beijing Road stop, or take subway to get off at the Park Front Station.

Curio Street

Whether you have just taken some tea in Panxi Restaurant or come out of Xiguan Folk Culture Museum, you would have to pass the popular Curio Street. You can take a leisurely stroll and visit the curio shops here.

Transport: Take buses No. 2, 8 or 25 and get off at the Pantang stop, or take subway to get off at Changshou Road Station and walk over.

Qingping Herbal Medicine Centre

People who visit Guangzhou usually buy some medicinal items. Traditional Chinese medicine shops have now moved into medicinal goods centres, serving the customers more conveniently. One good example is Qingping Medicinal Goods Centre, a three-storey European style building at 246 on 623 Road. It houses 500 stores, all exceptionally neat and clean. Mind you, take enough money with you.

Transport: Take buses No. 9, 64 or 75 and get off at the Huangsha stop, or take subway and get off at Huangsha Station. Business hours: 8:30-18:00

Taojin Road

If you want to buy something of a well-known brand and high quality, go to Taojin Road. The Friendship Store on this road has a rich variety of famous international brands. Infinite Music on this road is also worth visiting.

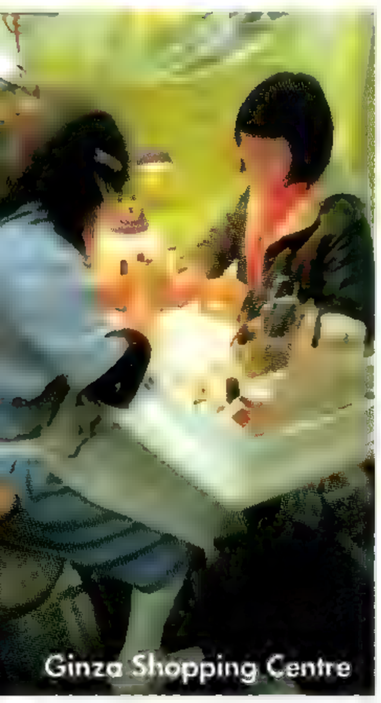
Transport: Take buses No. 6, 10, 30 or 122 to the White Cloud Hotel stop. Business hours of the Friendship Store: 9:30-21:45

Market of Small Commodities

The wholesale stores and retail shops in Guangzhou selling various small commodities and souvenirs are irresistible.

Yiyuan Store at 85 Yide Road sells toys, stationery, and more. The New Yiyuan Wholesale Market at 297 Yide Road Central also distributes toys and stationery. And there are more in this area. Their commodities are sold at a very low wholesale price, but are of the latest design and most attractive.

Transport: To Yide Road, take buses No. 5, 64, or 87 and get off at the Jiefang Toad South stop; to Yide Road Central or West, take buses No. 4, 8, 61 or 82 and get off at the stop of Yide Road West stop.



Ginza Shopping Centre

Guangzhou Book Shopping Centre

Upper and Lower Nine Roads

Liuhua Bird Market

Photos by Shi Baoxiu, Dianna Lau — Article by Dianna Lau

A Day in Guangzhou

Guangzhou is a place with unique features. If you observe carefully, you'll always find something interesting and vivid going on in the life of this city. A tourist may see something nostalgic, something fashionable, something philistine or something ordinary. But all of these episodes combine to form a genuine Guangzhou picture. It is invaluable for a tourist to have this experience as well as being shepherded to major scenic spots.

Guangzhou people get up early, at a time when you might still be in bed. Their day ends late, at a time when you might already be in slumber. Day in, day out, life goes on....

6:00-8:00 Programmes at Dawn

(by Xie Guanghui)

Yuexiu Park

Even on a drizzly day, Yuexiu Park sees no end of customers arriving for their morning dim sum or to do their morning exercises. Even before daybreak, a simply furnished teahouse, whose lights twinkle in the darkness, is already filled with its regular customers. According to the established practice, they buy coupons first at the teller (many elderly are given discount coupons). Then they choose newly steamed or fried snacks outside. The queue for steamed rice flour rolls with fillings is always the longest. With their selection, the diners enter the room and find a good place to eat. People do not mind sharing a table with anyone — after all they all know one another. The teahouse allows customers to go to the tearoom to pour themselves a cup of tea. It is all so natural that it seems as if the dim sum is being served at home.

Breakfast is over and they begin their usual activity in the park. By then the sun begins to show its face. The little hillock is divided into several areas for different exercises or recreational activities, such as Taiji boxing, local opera singing, dancing, table tennis, badminton, shuttlecock kicking, or mahjong games. Anyone is welcome to join in. A new day full of vitality has begun.

Liuhua Bird Market

As the day dawns, Liuhua Bird Market begins its business. Bird fanciers come from tower blocks to the market situated by a lake. They swing birdcages from their hand, hold them high on their shoulder, or carry them with a shoulderpole.

The bird market is a good place for morning exercises, but also a place to have breakfast or meet bird-fancier friends. Birdcages are everywhere, some as tall as a metre with a diameter of two feet, others the size of a mini-cooker. They are hung on tree branches and on railings. There are so many sitting on the ground that you have to watch where you walk. There are all kinds of birds, including siskins, larks, thrushes, mynahs, parrots and so many more, all chirping ceaselessly. Their owners would do their exercises in the morning breeze, then have some breakfast at the open stalls by the lake. They are often heard exchanging bird stories as they tuck into all sorts of dim sum.

Here, everything bird-related is available. On one side stands a line of stalls selling worms or grain as bird food. The sight of thousands of fat worms wriggling in cases may make someone's flesh creep, but in the eyes of the bird fanciers, they probably offer a welcome sight. Then there are various exquisitely made tools for feeding birds or some other service.

It seems that as the population grows and the city becomes increasingly overcrowded, people become less concerned about one another. Meanwhile their relations with birds, cats and dogs have turned closer. This is probably a syndrome of modern metropolitan life.

9:00-12:00 In the Morning

Hawkers

Wandering through streets and alleyways, you come across various mobile stalls. They are wooden carts or traditional loads of baskets on a shoulder-pole carrying small amounts of commodities for sale. The peddlers hawk their wares as they walk. This method of transaction was quite popular in Hong Kong in the 1970s. Commodities for sale are rich in variety: ice tea, sweet soup, heated soup, vegetables, daily necessities, clothes, and all sorts. A smartly dressed man may approach an elderly woman selling sweet soup in the street. Then he tuck into a bowl of red bean paste, which only costs a few yuan.

Library

If you want to find shelter from the drizzle or send an E-mail home, visit the library. At the Guangzhou Library, you may be surprised to see the bookstalls lined in front of the entrance. Books of all kinds are sold at a big discount. Many young and old people are standing by the stalls reading.

To the left of the library lobby is a computer room, a very popular space with students. The charge for Internet surfing is five yuan per hour and it is always crowded. The library provides books, newspapers and magazines in Chinese and English. From the ground floor up, each floor is packed with people. And they are all avid readers.

Zhuangyuan Lane

This is another shopping street, set aside for the unemployed to do business. However, it has now become a place for college graduates to display their talents. The lane is lined with stalls, each with an area of five to six square metres. The main commodities are fashionable but inexpensive clothes. It is often packed to overflowing with young people.

Guangzhou Food Street

From the moment one arrives in Guangzhou, one's appetite seems to increase. When you feel hungry for lunch, you can go to the Food Street, Damazhan, to try its many delicious snacks. Beef noodles, small meat dumplings, handmade noodles, congees, and desserts of all kinds fill the stalls. There are no lavish decorations; all is plain and clean. There are also many second-hand bookstores along both sides of the street, and the names on the lintels of the old residences indicate that it was once a place with a strong cultural tradition. The customers are mostly local residents. As they eat, they sit and observe the passers by. Time ticks away unheeded.

12:00 At Lunch Time

Taking A Nap

The old part of Guangzhou is engulfed in a languid atmosphere after lunch. Small carts are parked all along the street, their drivers all taking a nap. Obviously, having completed their missions, they do not care about the pedestrians passing by or the bright daylight. To a visitor who is exhausted from touring the city and has just finished a hearty meal, the scene looks highly attractive!

Free Newspapers

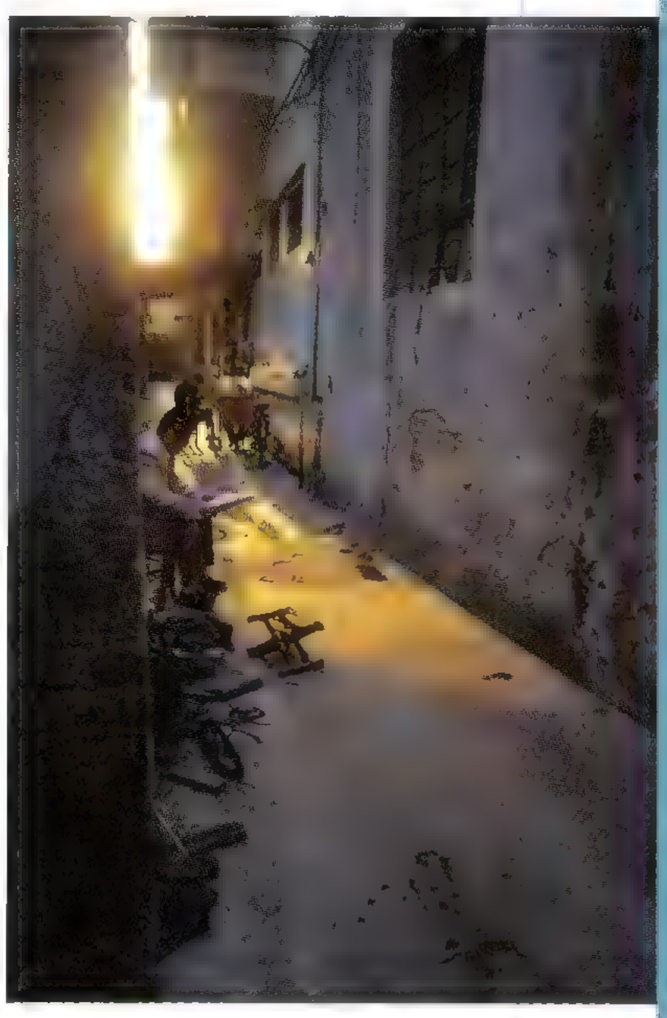
In the cities of the mainland of China, you may notice a kind of bulletin board on which newspapers are posted for people to read. There is always a cluster of avid readers before those boards. Sometimes, when an important news item crops up, strangers will exchange views on the spot. A tourist might also join in the discussion. Apart from finding out the latest news, it is also a way of getting to know how the local residents react and how they look at things. Such exchanges are very interesting and insightful. What's more, it doesn't cost you a cent!

Barber's in the Open

It is beside one of these newspaper boards that someone is having his hair cut. It is an open-air barber's. The customer sits docilely right in front of a mirror that hangs on the tree trunk in front. Perhaps because the mirror is too small to include a clearer and wider view, the man can confidently enjoy his haircut, putting total trust in the barber.

A Watch Repairer

The sun is setting and slanting its golden rays into this small lane, highlighting a watch repairer. Illuminated by the golden sunbeams, his devotion to his work, devoid of the usual exaggerated poses, is utterly striking. Even an ordinary man in the simplest surrounding can portray a touch of glamour.



14:00-17:00 Street Scenes

Xigong Night Market

Of the three meals in a day in Guangzhou, the most important is supper. For tourists to Guangzhou, the best place is the food night market at Xigong. Seafood eateries stretch along the bank of the Pearl River. For Chinese, this place offers a great atmosphere for a meal. Before you have made up your mind, a warm waitress might have come over and coaxed you into her restaurant. The seafood dish is always cooked instantly, using the live material you choose. Some eateries even offer free beer to attract customers. When the bill is shown after a hearty meal, you might be quite surprised to find the food so cheap. You may decide to order another portion of scallops cooked in minced garlic!

(by Chan Yat Nin)

19:00-21:00 Dining in Guangzhou

22:00-2:00 Crazy Night

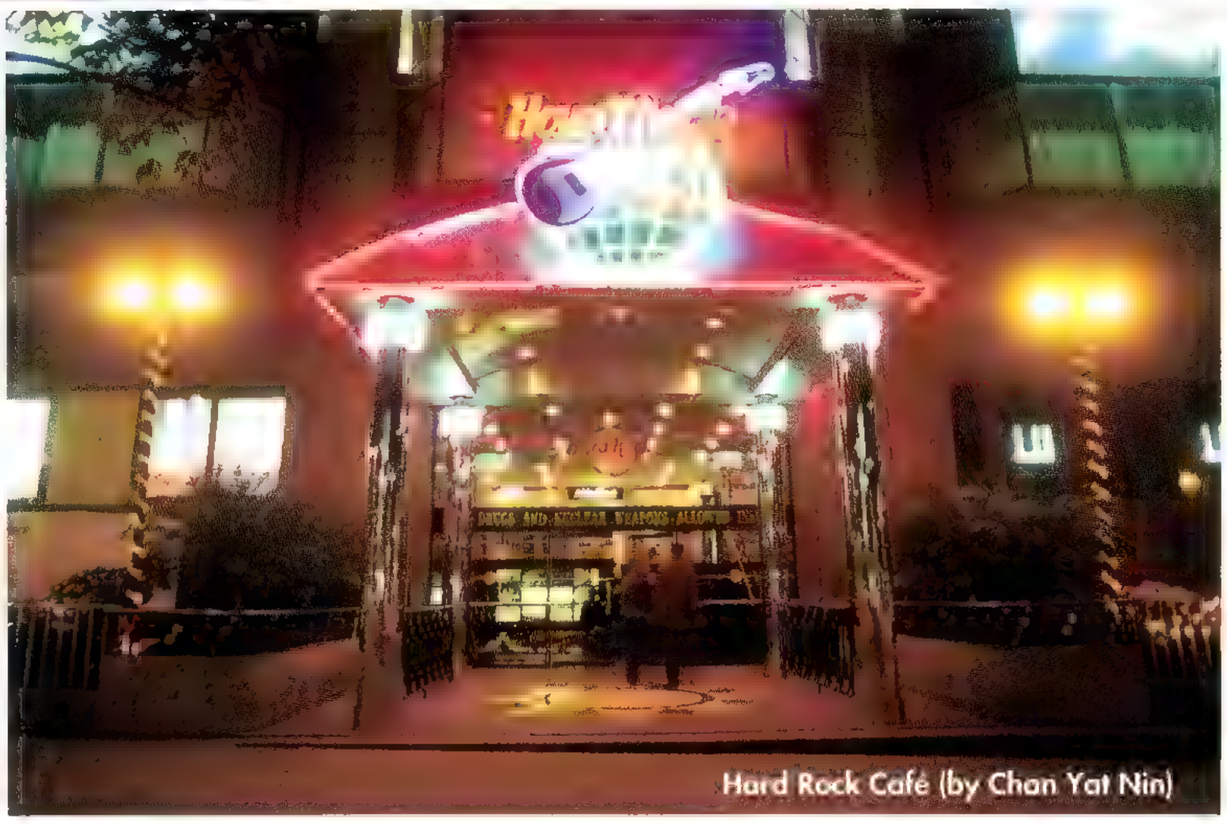
Wind Flower Music Club

Discotheque:

The nightlife in Guangzhou begins and ends earlier than that in Hong Kong. According to newly amended local regulations, all entertaining venues must be closed before 2 a.m. for the sake of security. So at 9 p.m. Discotheques are already full of young people, Yuppies and expatriates. DJs are usually foreigners. In some discotheques, there are live bands playing music. In order to intensify the atmosphere, robust girl dancers are often invited to perform on the stage. The most popular discotheque in the city is the Wind Flower near the Holiday Inn. Visitors are all fashionably dressed and raring to go. Inside, everybody is so crazy that obviously they are about to bring the roof down.

Of course, the Peace Road Bar close by, Face Club at 191 Dongfeng Road West (Tel. 8388 0688), the Hard Rock Café in China Hotel are all very popular places for night entertainment, too. But if you want to enjoy some pure music, the Take Five Jazz Café (Tel. 8359 6681) at 11 Taojin Street is probably your cup of tea. Performance of some jazz music or playing of tape recordings would make your evening very pleasant. The night in Guangzhou will never let you feel lonely.

Translated by F. Huang, M. J. Wang


Hard Rock Café (by Chan Yat Nin)

Transport

Guangzhou is well connected with major Chinese cities by air and railway. There are seven trains each way between Hong Kong and Guangzhou everyday. The earliest train from Hong Kong is at 8:25 and the latest is at 16:45. The journey takes one hour and 45 minutes. A one-way fare is HK$ 190.

Telephone number for inquiry in Hong Kong: (852) 2947 7888.

There are also seven Luxurious bus services each way between Hong Kong and Guangzhou everyday. The journey takes about three hours. A one-way fare is HK$ 130.

Telephone for inquiry in Hong Kong: (852) 2764 9803.

Accommodation

There are various hotels in Guangzhou to cater for all budgets. A number of hotels are listed as follows for your reference. You may also browse the Internet for inquiries and booking of rooms (www.Chinatravel1.com), and more information is also provided in our "Executive's Memo" on p. 86.

Guangzhou International Youth Hotel (convenient for transport)

Add: Guangdong Travel Tower, 179 Huaishi Road West (near the Railway Station); Tel: (20) 8666 6889;

Standard double room: about 128 yuan

Xinqiang Hotel (within the pedestrian street, easy access to stores)

Add: 279 Beijing Road; Tel: (20) 8333 0323;

Standard double room: 148 yuan

Lidu Hotel (easy access to stores)

Add: 182 Beijing Road; Tel: (20) 8332 1988;

Standard double room: 320 yuan

Xintianhe (New Teem) Hotel*** (near Teem Plaza)

Add: 178-188 Tianhe Road; Tel: (20) 8559 5888;

Standard double room: 388 yuan

Guotai Hotel (near the shopping & bar area on Taojin Road)

Add: 376 Huaishi Road East; Tel: (20) 8386 2888;

Standard double room: 500 yuan

Garden Hotel Guangzhou***** (near the shopping & bar area on Taojin Road)

Add: 368 Huaishi Road East; Tel: (20) 8333 8989;

Standard double room: US$140

Guangzhou Holiday Inn Cultural Plaza (near shopping & bar area on Taojin Road)

Add: 28 Guangming Road, New Huaqiao Village, Huanshi Road East; Tel: (20) 8776 6999;

Standard double room: US$130

China Hotel***** (near China Export Commodity Trading Exhibition Centre)

Add: Liuhua Road; Tel: (20) 8666 6888;

Standard double room: US$148

White Swan Hotel***** (in Shamian, an area with strong European ambience)

Add: Shamian; Tel: (20) 8188 6968;

Standard double room: US$140

References for Touring Guangzhou

Guangzhou Information Network: This is a free public information facility developed by Guangzhou municipal government and Guangzhou Tourism Administration. The full name is "Guangzhou Information Network — Public Information System". By touching the screen of a monitor connected with the system, you may easily find information about basic facts of Guangzhou, details of urban areas, transport, shopping, entertainment, restaurants, hotels, industry and commerce, and municipal administration. Such monitors are available in all entry and exit ports (airport, railway stations, docks), major communication junctions, subway stations, hotels, shopping centres, and major scenic spots.

Map of Guangzhou: It would be better to buy a map of Guangzhou when you arrive. There is detailed and useful information on maps published by Guangzhou Tourism Administration and Guangdong Map Publishing House. They are a must for a tourist in Guangzhou.

City Pictorial: A lively bi-weekly published on Fridays in the even weeks by Guangzhou City Pictorial Publishing House. The price per copy is 6 yuan. It is available in kiosks in subway stations and 7.11 shops.

That's Guangzhou: A magazine in English covering new developments in the city, particularly in restaurants, pubs, recreational activities, it is distributed free of charge in many large restaurants and pubs.

There are many books about Guangzhou, which you can find in the Xinhua Bookstore. Readers who know some Chinese can find references in the following titles.

Guangzhou Shopping Guide

Directories of stores selling various commodities are listed in detail. Available at bookstores and station booths, it costs 5.9 yuan.

Guangzhou Municipality Dictionary

Published by the Guangdong Tourism Publishing House, 18 yuan.

It offers basic facts about the city, historical events, city construction and development, nature, cultural heritage, traditional culture, shopping, food and drink, and more. Well written, brief, a quick way to learn about Guangzhou.

Old Guangzhou

Published by Jiangsu Find Art Publishing House, 23 yuan. A collection of photos of the city's old architecture, with text; anecdotes of old days; traditions of teahouse and flower fair, etc., it is a work with strong nostalgia.

Xiguan Stories

Published by Guangzhou Publishing House, 4 volumes, 24 yuan. It comprises the lifestyles and customs of Xiguan, an old urban area of Guangzhou.

China Tourism

A monthly periodical published by HK China Tourism Press, it reports travel in all parts of China, including Guangzhou. Besides this issue, stories about Guangzhou are also seen in other recent issues: "Chasing the Memory of Old Xiguan in Guangzhou", No. 244 and "A Taste of Europe in Shamian, Guangzhou", No. 250.

Guangzhou Website for Travellers: http://www.gzta.com.cn

NATURE

WETLANDS ON THE YELLOW RIVER IN QIACHUAN

The seven hot springs in Qiaotou are truly world wonders. They are scattered in the farm fields of four villages — Xinli, Xinye, Xinyang and Wangcun — in Dongwang Township. The Erchi, Yandou and Xili hot springs can be found in Xinli Village; the Majiew hot spring lies in Xinyang Village and that of Maxi in Wangcun Village. To the east of Xinye on the bank of the Yellow River is the Dongjing hot spring. It is recorded in history books that the hot springs are "as big as cart wheels and look like boiling cauldrons". The temperature of the spring water remains constant at about 31 °C. One ancient writer once wrote: "The spring water seems to be coming out in clouds. It flows and trickles to irrigate the fertile fields and nourish the crops."

It was mid-winter when I first went on a trip to Qiachuan. We drove from Xi'an along an asphalt road for 190 km to the northeast and, after passing through Weinan and Dali, arrived at Heyang, an ancient county town with a history of 1,000 years. From Heyang, we went for 23 km to the east, drove down two terraces and reached the old course of the Yellow River, a valley known as Qiachuan, stretching for 31 km from south to north and five kilometres from west to east.

Mirrors on the Wetlands

There had been a heavy snow, the likes of which had not been seen for many years. The barren loess was covered with a glistening silvery coat. The roaring Yellow River was stilled beneath a thick layer of ice. The second layer of terrace close to the Yellow River had evolved into shapely hills as a result of long years of erosion. The weird hills and deep gullies draped in snow and ice conjured up a striking picture. We had to stop the car to admire them. Looking into the distance from the top of a loess hill, we could see clusters of reeds and the frozen Yellow River extending as far as the horizon and merging with the silvery grey sky. There were villages here and there on the snowy field with silk-like blue cooking smoke rising from them. We could even smell burning wheat straw in the wind. The most eye-catching sight, though, was that of the seven ponds of different sizes inlaid in the snowy field. As the sun emerged and then disappeared behind the clouds, they glittered mercurially. There was a puff of steamy air above each of the "mirrors", dense at one moment and wispy the next. Mr. Wang, a young man from the county Tourism Administration who was travelling with us, told us that the ponds are the hot springs, which have existed on the wetlands of the Yellow River for more than 3,000 years, from the time when they were first recorded in written documents.

Scientific analysis shows that the spring water is rich in fertilising elements, such as nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium, which explains why grass, crops, vegetables and fruit trees flourish in the Qiachuan area. The water also contains traces of strontium, copper and selenium, all beneficial to the human body. The local people have long bathed in the spring water for the treatment of disease and to improve their health.

From Wang we learned that the spring water in Qiachuan is pressure water located geographically in a fault zone in the northeast region of the Guanzhong Basin. As a result of faulting and slashing by the Yellow River, the ozonic limestone water deep in the earth spurts out and creates the hot springs. Of the seven springs, Mafen in Xiayang Village has the greatest rate of flow, reaching 0.76 square

metres per second. People in ancient times had built a canal to irrigate the fields, which extends to the Chaoyi area in the eastern section of Dali County. As the local government often sent men to patrol the canal on horseback, people called the spring Mafen (Horse Spring). The Horse Spring had been swamped by the Yellow River for more than 100 years. After work to divert the water of the Yellow River was completed in 1975, the spring reappeared. In recent years, the Shaanxi Provincial Research Institute of Aquatic Products has been making use of the good-quality spring water to breed fine species of fish. The several hundred large and small fishponds built by the institute are now scattered over five kilometres along the sandy bank of the Yellow River.

— Romantic Virgin Spring —

The Donglu Spring, popularly called the Virgin Spring, has a romantic touch. It is actually a group of many large and small springs. When the water flows out, it carries fine golden sand with it and forms a pond shaped like a large butterfly. You don't sink to the bottom in this pond because the water is extremely buoyant. Once in the pond, the sand in the water caresses you like gentle fingers, automatically washing you clean in the process. This is called "bathing in sandy water", a very pleasant experience and a natural wonder long enjoyed by the people of Qiachuan. In particular, when girls are to be married, they invariably come to bathe in this spring. Hence the spring is known as the Virgin Spring.

Qiachuan has been known to be a birthplace of beautiful women since ancient times, a reputation attributed to the excellent quality of its water. There is an age-old romantic story, which says that in the early 11th century B.C., a local Xin family nad a daughter named Taisi, a dazzling beauty. On an auspicious day, King Wen of the Zhou Dynasty came persona ly to ask for her hand.

— Swimming in Winter —

A long and winding bridge has been built on the wetlands north of the pond. There are cabins at both ends for tourists to take a rest. A two-storey concrete-and-brick building stands on the eastern side of the reeds surrounding the pond for swimmers to change clothes and take a shower. Even though it was mid-winter when we were there, the pond gave off clouds of white vapour. A man and a woman ran out of the building directly towards the pond. The woman was the first to get there. She threw off her bathing robe and jumped into the pond. Two impish children jumped in after her. The man was the last to arrive. After tidying up the clothes they had thrown on the edge of the pond, he unhurriedly joined his family. After having a general cleanup of their house for the Chinese New Year, this local family had come to take the last bathe of the lunar year in the Virgin Spring.

At this moment, the clouds began to disperse in the sky. The water and reeds in the pond, fishnet and the buildings near the winding bridge were flooded with the crimson of the setting sun. The soft golden rays poured down on the faces of the happy family through the steam. My fellow photographer Lao An and I took photographs of the attractive scenery until nightfall.

—— Life on the Farm ——

It was windy and extremely cold on the sandy bank of the Yellow River. Wang took us to Zhao Yinlong's home, in a compound of houses not far away, for the night. Zhao had served as a policeman away from home. When he heard that Qiachuan, his native place, was going to be developed into a tourist area, he resigned from his post and returned to his home village Wangcun. With a cost of more than

Previous page: As mist rises over the hot springs in winter, villages enveloped by a thin mist look like the abodes of immortals. (by Hu Wugong)

1. Warm water flows out silently, maintaining a constant temperature. (by An Yongcai)

2. Egrets in the cold wind. (An Yongcai)

3. Herons on a treetop. (by Hu Wugong)

4. Migrant birds find their winter shelter on a pond. (by An Yongcai)

5. Mandarin ducks hiding in reed groves in winter. (by An Yongcan)

100,000 yuan, he built a compound of houses on the four sides of a courtyard. The rooms are to serve as a hostel, and the courtyard is paved with concrete to make do as a dance floor. To cater to tourists, he bought a boiler and installed central heating. The room we were ushered into was nice and warm. After we had sat down, Mrs. Zhao brought in a bowl of piping-hot corn gruel, steamed bread and crispy pickles.

It was a novel way of entertaining visitors. Tourists who are used to life in the city don't always want to stay in luxurious hotels and be served monotonous rich meals of meat and fish. Here, staying in a farmhouse in the countryside, sleeping on a brick bed and eating corn and millet all present a genuine experience of pastoral life. In the nature reserve, farmers are encouraged to receive tourists. As no large-scale construction is allowed, the pastoral scenery and natural ecology have been preserved, to the benefit of both the farmers and the environment.

'Forever Waiting'

It was already 10 p.m. by the time we had finished our supper. As the wind had died away, I walked out of the compound towards the Mother and Son Spring. The snow had frozen hard on the ground, no longer crackling with each step, but very slippery. The spring was about 20 metres north of the compound. In the pale moonlight, steam continued to rise from the spring, which is actually composed of two springs, one larger and the other smaller. They gush into a pond of 0.6 hectare, which has been developed into a restful place for fishing, boating and swimming. The water in the pond gurgled as fish flopped around in it. I sat down under a willow tree, removed my shoes and socks and dipped my feet into the water, which was only lukewarm. As I splashed forcefully with my feet, a black shadow rushed out of the reeds, flapped its wings and took to the moonlit sky. It gave me a good scare. I was thrown out of balance and almost fell into the water. In the moonlight, I could see it was a bird with long legs and a long beak. Its wingspan was about two metres. When I returned to the compound, Zhao told me that the bird was a heron. It feeds on fish, frogs, snakes, shellfish and other small creatures. It never goes out to search for them but waits quietly in the water. When they approach, it snaps them up swiftly with its long beak. The local people nicknamed the bird "forever waiting". The herons migrate to the area from Siberia and China's Northeast and Xinjiang for winter and fly away promptly on the First Day of Spring.

A Couple of Farmers at Taoyuan

The following day, when the wetlands on the Yellow River were still enshrouded in morning mist, we went out to take photos of swans, black stocks and red-crowned cranes. A newspaper report said that since February 1995, there have appeared 143 red-crowned cranes, over 1,000 swans, 13 black herons and a countless number of "forever waiting" birds, mandarin ducks, wild ducks and other water birds on the wetlands of the Yellow River at Qiachuan. These rare birds are easily startled and always on the alert as a result of cruel killing and poisoning by human beings. We had turned off the engine of our car

several hundred metres from them and crawled silently towards them. But when we were about 100 metres away, the swans flapped their wings all at once and flew to the reeds in the distance. The red-crowned cranes were even more watchful. They gathered in a group on a solitary island in the Yellow River, inaccessible to man. The "forever waitings" stood in a row in the leeway of clusters of reeds. With their necks bent and backs arched, they waited perfectly still for fish to swim near. They were like the legendary old fisherman who waited patiently in the cold for fish to offer themselves voluntarily. Only the mandarin ducks and wild ducks were bolder. As we started to photograph them, they swam quickly into the reeds but still did not fly away.

As the morning mist gradually began to disperse, a log cabin and some ancient willow trees on the edge of the pond came into view. Taking a break from his work, a lotus grower sat by the pond smoking a pipe. His wife had brought his lunch to him. After handing it over, she stood by his side and watched him as he wolfed it down. They presented a picture of life in a haven of peace. We did not leave immediately, but stayed and took photographs of them. Through the thin mist, I could hear the woman asking her husband what we were doing there. "They're taking photographs of us." "Why?" "Because we are like two lovers in heaven."

Revisiting Qiachuan in Summer

It was only in recent years that the natural scenery of Qiachuan began to attract people's attention. Historically, Qiachuan had been more of a cultural centre. King Ku, one of the Five Kings of the 26th-22nd centuries B.C., was buried here. The famous Prime Minister Yi Yin of the Shang Dynasty (16th-11th century B.C.) had cultivated crops here. It was also here that Zi Xia, one of Confucius' 72 outstanding disciples, had run a school, and Bodhidharma, the patriarch of the Chan Sect of Buddhism, and his disciple Hui Ke, had built a monastery and lectured on Buddhist scriptures. These famous historical figures had left behind a rich cultural legacy.

In July 2000, my friends and I came to Qiachuan again when the land had long shed its silvery grey winter attire and changed into the rich colours of the summer. The green reed marsnes extended to the edge of the Yellow River nearly five kilometres away and the large expanse of lotus ponds was cut by rows of poplars into carpet-like squares. The delicate lotus flowers were attracting kingfishers and bees. The whole of Qiachuan had become a world of lotuses and reeds. Tourists could step into the ponds to pick lotus seeds or row a boat through the reed groves and enjoy the warm sunshine and gentle breeze.

Great changes had taken place at the Virgin Spring. A wooden house with a reed roof serving as a restaurant had been built by a reed grove 500 metres wide. A row of vendor's simple stands displayed many different styles of swimwear and colourful lifebuoys and sundry goods. Along the road in the north were food stalls operated by local farmers offering bean-starch noodles, thin pancakes and buckwheat noodles. The buckwheat noodles seemed to be very popular among the tourists. They were made with buckwheat flour, steamed and then boiled. After adding spices, this special local snack was ready to serve. Qiachuan had become much noisier since my previous visit.

Xiayang Ferry Crossing

The scenic spots and cultural attractions in Qiachuan are to be found in the villages in an area with a diameter of five kilometres. The villages are connected by earthen roads, along which the animal-drawn carts of the farmers have been put to good use. Shaded with an awning made of colourful bed-sheets, the carts moving to and fro among the reed groves have become a new attraction in the hot springs district.

We rode in an ox-drawn cart to look for the site of the Xiayang Ferry Crossing. Even though the cart bumped a lot along the uneven earthen road, it was a pleasant experience. After travelling about two kilometres to the north, we found a square stone tablet carved with the words: Muying Ferry Point, at the entrance to Xiayang Village. Muying was another name for Xiayang, and the ferry was one of the oldest on the Yellow River, linking Heyang and Linyi in the states of Qin and Jin respectively. The ferry crossing was a water passage of strategic importance between the two states and even between the east and west of China at the time.

In the year 205 B.C., when the states of Chu and Han fought for supremacy, the two sides were locked in a stalemate at Chenggao on the southern side of the river. The situation

1. The warm vapour of the springs turns into frost on the cold reeds on this early winter morning, presenting a touching picture. (by An Yongcai)
2. A lotus grower eating lunch delivered by his wife. (by Hu Wugong)

suddenly became very critical when Bao, the king of the state of Wei, turned against Han. Han Xin, the Marquis of Huaiyin, of the state of Han, ordered his general Guan Ying to lead an army of 10,000 men and feign crossing the river on 100 ferry boats at Linjin in the lower reaches to mislead the Wei army. Meanwhile, he himself and Cao Shen led the bulk of his army to Xiayang, where he bought a great number of pottery jars with a bulging body and a small mouth. He had the jars tied together between wooden sticks and used them as rafts called muying. After a forced crossing of the Yellow River on these crafts, his army marched straight on Anyi, the capital of the state of Wei, and captured King Bao. Han Xin then launched attacks on the states of Yan and Zhao and overturned the critical situation at Chenggao. From then on, the name of the ferry crossing was changed from Xiayang to Muying or Huaiyin. Travelling past the place during the Wanli reign of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), a man named Liu Yingfu from Shangqiu, Henan, wrote the poem "On the Huaiyin Ferry", which reads:

Flying across the river, the muyings jeered at war junks,
And in the battle at Pujing they performed great deeds.
Gone are the heroes as the river flows on,
The waves roar like battle cries.

The village now lay in silence in the shade of green trees. There were cows crouching in front of farmhouses, chewing the cud. Magpies stood boldly on the backs of the cows and chatted with their mates on the treetops. It was a picture of perfect peace.

The Yellow River has long changed its course to the Loess Terrace at Chengwangdu in Shanxi Province, 2.5 km away, leaving behind the vast Yellow River wetlands, a wondrous area of natural scenery.

A thin layer of ice covers the wetlands, creating an even more tranquil picture. (by Hu Wugong)

Tips for the Traveller

○ **Transport**

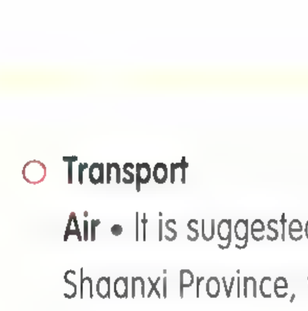
Air • It is suggested that you fly to Xi'an, capital of Shaanxi Province, which is connected by air with major Chinese cities.

Bus • From the bus station in the eastern part of Xi'an, buses depart for the county town of Heyang every 15 minutes between 7:40 a.m. and 5:15 p.m.

Fare • 18.50-22.50 yuan.

From Heyang to the Qiachuan Scenic Area:

Regular buses run between 7:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. Fare: 5 yuan.



○ **Accommodation**

Heyang County Government Reception House

Standard room 50 yuan/night.

Qiachuan Scenic Area: There are 30 family boarding houses approved by the government at 15 yuan per person/night and 5 yuan per meal.

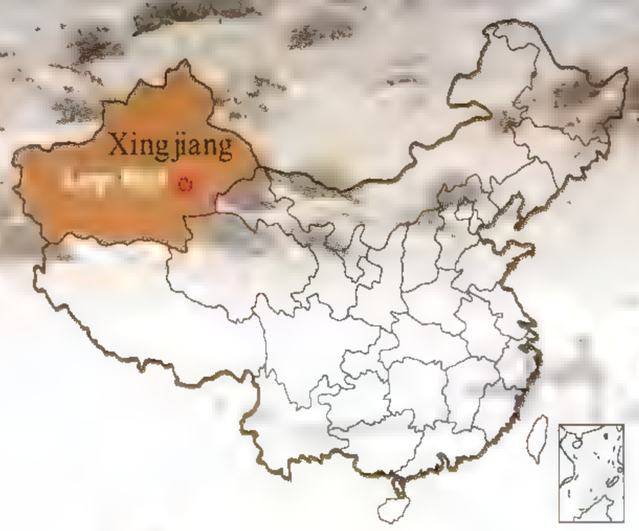
○ **Admission Fees**

Virgin Spring: 15 yuan, Xiayang Spring: 5 yuan.

○ **Notes**: The area can be visited during all the four seasons of the year.

Summer: Temperatures range between 23 C and 35 C. It is the ideal season for viewing the vast expanse of lotus ponds and reeds.

Winter: Temperatures range from -5 C to 15 C. A down coat and warm underwear are needed. There is the pretty snow scene of the Yellow River to see as well as the dream-like mists over the Virgin Spring. The area is the winter home of swans, egrets, black storks, mandarin ducks and other birds.



TREKKING THROUGH THE SEA OF DEATH —

DIARY OF AN ADVENTURE INTO LOP NUR

Photos & article by Lu Renjia

Editor's Note: *The author joined an exploratory group travelling deep into Lop Nur, known as "the sea of death", in Xinjiang last year. The knowledge he gained and the moments of alarm and joy he experienced in the eight days would be unknown to most regular travellers.*

September 30, 2000 ☼ 32°C

Dunhuang ⇢ Yumen Pass ⟶ 'Little Shanghai' Yadan Formations

Shortly after 9 a.m., the convoy set off on a journey to Lop Nur. There are 44 of us in the group, riding in 11 cross-country vehicles of all makes (including the Toyota Land Cruiser and Beijing Jeep), a command car, a reserve jeep and a nine-ton truck loaded with water, food, tools, petrol and two live sheep. I have been assigned to ride with Stranger C, Aunt Qi and Sister Qi (names we use to address one another) in the same jeep. The driver's name is Xu, a 27-year-old Han man, who is married and lives in Urümqi.

Once we left Dunhuang, all that lay ahead was the boundless expanse of the Gobi. We drove along the wind-eroded Yumen Pass and the remains of a section of the Han-dynasty Great Wall. We came to a vast area of yadan landscape known as "Little Shanghai" because the large and small yadan formations are like a fleet of ocean-going ships anchored at the Bund in Shanghai.

After driving for another five kilometres, one of our jeeps became bogged down in loose sand. We all got out and began to gather rocks and twigs to place in front of the wheels, then pushed with all our might until the jeep was freed.

At dusk, we rigged up a tent near a large yadan hill. Supper was a meal of several dishes, a seaweed soup, rice from the north and beer. All the dishes and bowls were placed on the ground and we squatted down to eat. We had to move very gently, because the slightest stir would throw dust into the food. It was already past six by the time we finished eating. The sun was setting. The yadan landscape looked quite striking in the evening glow. (Xinjiang uses Beijing standard time, but is in fact two hours behind.)

As the tent isn't large enough, and also because I want to test my down sleeping bag, I am sleeping alone in the open tonight. The sky is spangled with stars. The Milky Way, which I haven't seen for a long time, is spread across the sky. It looks extraordinarily beautiful.

Note: There is no toilet in the Gobi. It is much easier for the men; for the women, they have to go in two or three to help one another build a shelter by holding up a coat. All the same, relieving oneself in the wilderness is a delightful experience.

CULTURE

Kushui: Kingdom of the Rose

Photos by Wu Pingguan, Lu Junde
Article by Chun Yu

Years ago, the Chinese song "Rose, Rose, I Love You" was known to every household. Even three-year-old children and ladies in their 80s could sing it. Yet till today, it is doubtful that many people would know where in China roses are cultivated. Pingyin in Shandong, Mount Miaofeng in Beijing's suburbs, and Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces, can all be seen as "the home of the rose". The title of "kingdom of the rose", however, goes to Kushui in Gansu Province.

Kushui (Bitter Water) is not a comfortable place to live. It is situated in the central part of Gansu Province, with the Zhuanglang River running through it. As the weather is dry the whole year round, with very little rainfall and high evaporation, the soil is seriously saline-alkali and the mineralised underground water quite bitter and astringent, hence the name of the town. Yet strangely, it is to this township that the delicate and charming roses have taken a fancy. No one has any idea how or when they first took root here, but in the fifth lunar month, the roses bloom punctually on the mountains and in the plains, bringing vibrant life and colour to this arid stretch of land. Refreshing scent of roses wafts through the air.

Kushui grows a large quantity of roses every year. A *Beijing Evening News* correspondent wrote on September 30, 1983, that Kushui Village produced 20.825 kilograms of rose oil in that year. This may not sound like much, until you consider that a kilogram of rose oil is equal in value to 1.52 kilograms of gold. This is why the rose is also called "Gold Flower". It has been calculated that China consumes 90 kilograms of rose oil every year, 60 kilograms of which is produced in China. One-third of this comes from the small township of Kushui.

Rose oil is not easy to extract. The process involves steaming and distilling fresh roses, with each fresh flower containing only 0.02-0.055 percent oil. This means that it requires about three tons, or 3 million fresh flowers, to extract a kilogram of rose oil. The Kushui rose is a species with a smaller bloom but higher oil content. Two and a half tons of these will yield one kilogram of rose oil. Thus the extraction of 20.825 kilograms of rose oil requires at least 60 million fresh flowers. And when one kilogram of high-grade perfume is enriched with two tiny drops of rose oil, it immediately takes on the full-bodied fragrance of the rose.

The Kushui rose is a double bloom belonging to the "mixed blood" of the garland rose and the native Chinese rose. It has large thick petals, a bright colour and a strong scent, with a high yield of flowers and a high content — and quality — of oil. Compared with other varieties, the Kushui rose is considered the best species.

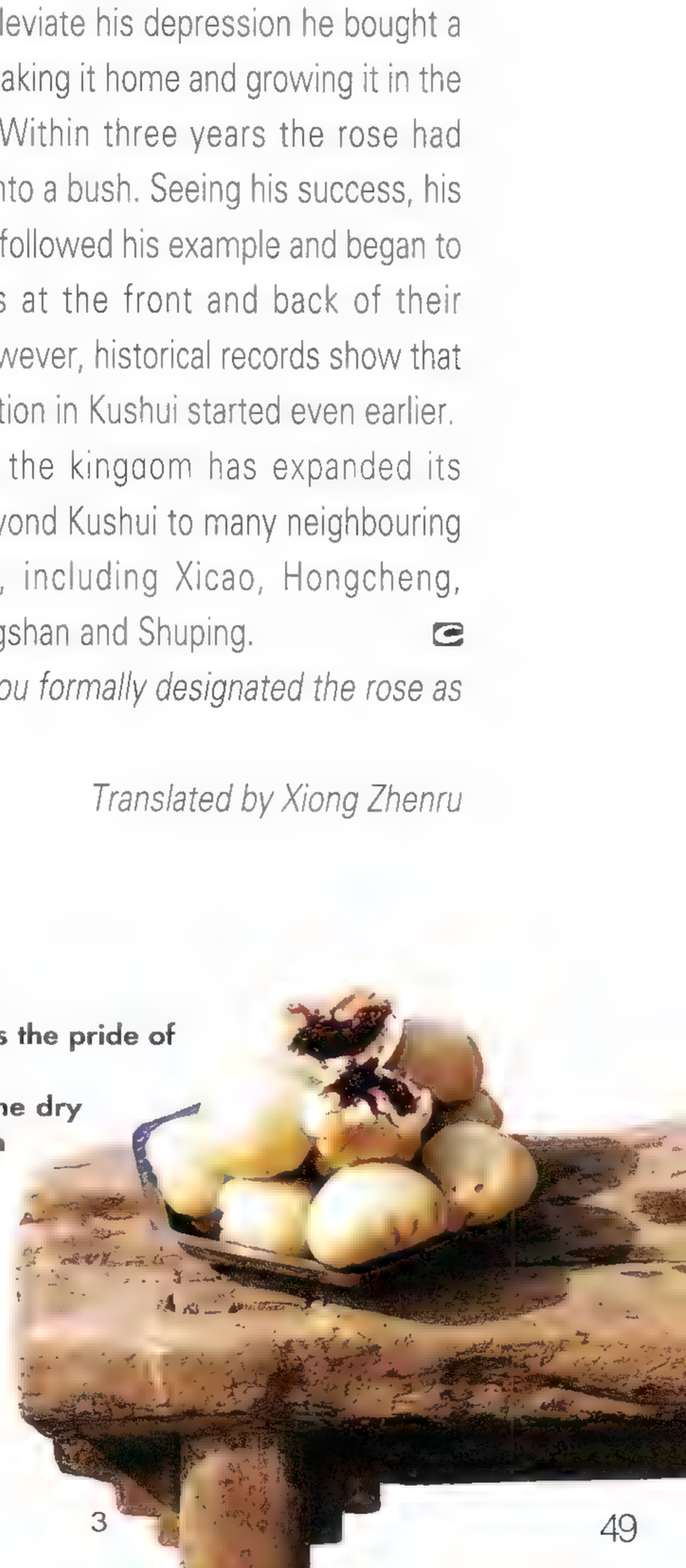
There is a folk tale that tells of the origin of the Kushui rose. During Emperor Daoguang's Reign (1820-50) in the Qing Dynasty, a scholar called Li Naixian from Liyao Village in Kushui Township went to sit examinations in Xi'an but failed. To alleviate his depression he bought a rose plant, taking it home and growing it in the courtyard. Within three years the rose had flourished into a bush. Seeing his success, his neighbours followed his example and began to plant roses at the front and back of their houses. However, historical records show that rose cultivation in Kushui started even earlier.

Today, the kingdom has expanded its territory beyond Kushui to many neighbouring townships, including Xicao, Hongcheng, Tatong, Longquan, Liancheng, Dongshan and Shuping.

Note: In spring of 1984, Lanzhou formally designated the rose as its city flower.

Translated by Xiong Zhenru

1. The delicate and charming rose is the pride of the Kushui people. (by Lu Junde)
2. The "Gold Flower" growing in the dry and infertile soil is one of the main sources of income for the people in Kushui. (by Wu Pingguan)
3. Steamed buns stuffed with fresh rose petals and sugar are delicious. (by Wu Pingguan)



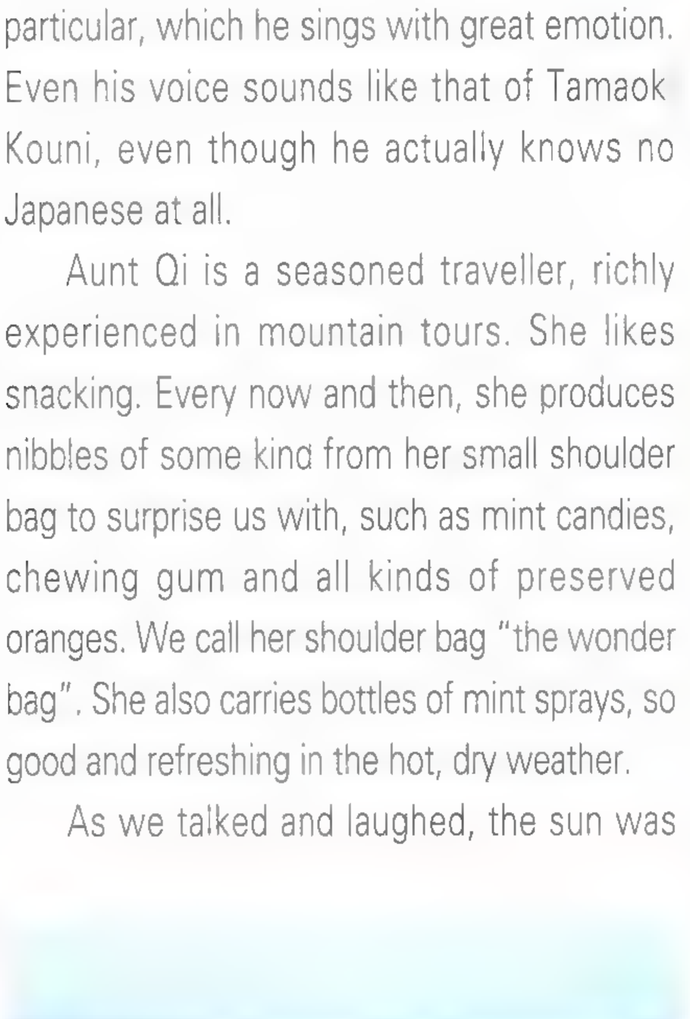
was when three of the vehicles all needed rescuing at once.

As we drive along, we sing and chat and the time passes quickly. The driver Xu is quiet most of the time, but when he does talk, what he has to say always sounds very interesting. He always drives with concentration and will not eat or drink water while driving. He doesn't even eat lunch. He often says jokingly of himself, "I'm a wild camel and eat only in the morning and evening. I store away food and water to digest slowly. Lunch? A cigarette is enough."

Stranger C is like a walking stereo player. He is very familiar with the cartoon films and popular songs of the past. He can sing most of the old songs, the Japanese ones in particular, which he sings with great emotion. Even his voice sounds like that of Tamaok Kouni, even though he actually knows no Japanese at all.

Aunt Qi is a seasoned traveller, richly experienced in mountain tours. She likes snacking. Every now and then, she produces nibbles of some kind from her small shoulder bag to surprise us with, such as mint candies, chewing gum and all kinds of preserved oranges. We call her shoulder bag "the wonder bag". She also carries bottles of mint sprays, so good and refreshing in the hot, dry weather.

As we talked and laughed, the sun was soon kissing the horizon again. We eventually arrived at the camping ground where Peng Jiamu, a scientific investigator, was lost.



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Note: Driver Xu said you have to drive at high speed in the desert to avoid being bogged down in the sand. This is because the sand differs in firmness from place to place, something that can't be distinguished by looking at the surface.

October 3, 2000 ☼

Kumkuduk ⟶ Dunes and the Gobi ⟶ Lighthouse in the Gobi.

Once we had finished packing up this morning, all the members of the group stood in a semi-circle in front of the memorial tablet for Peng Jiamu. Zhou, the team leader, spoke on the life of the pioneer explorer of Lop Nur and laid flowers. We bowed three times while the drivers blasted their horns in concert.

After driving into an alkaline area, the truck became bogged down in the sand again. When pushing failed to bring it out, we stood in several lines and began to unload the things from the truck, efficiently passing them from person to person, then lashed up the remaining half of the goods on the truck with ropes and wooden strips. Having removed the loose sand and replaced it with harder lumps of earth in front of the wheels, we pushed together until the truck rolled out of the mud.

On the way, we saw the carcass of a wild camel. We learned that not long ago, another wild camel had come and wandered around the spot, and it was believed to have come to mourn the dead one. The guide told us that because it was difficult to relocate a grave in the vast emptiness, when the Mongolians in the past were going to bury their dead, they always brought a mother camel and its calf with them. After the burial, they would kill the calf in front of the grave so that the mother camel would remember the spot where her calf died. When people came to hold memorial ceremonies in later years, the mother camel would take them to the spot. When they were near the burial place, the mother camel would cry sadly and the Mongolians knew that they were near the grave. Wild camels seem to have the longest and deepest memory of their dead.

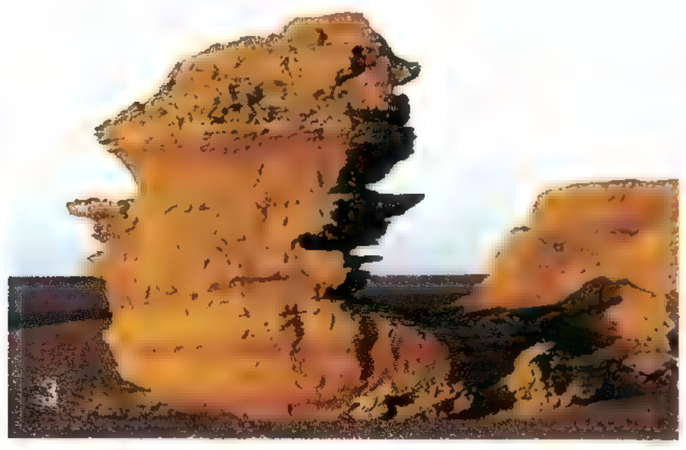
We arrived at a lighthouse, where we were to erect the tents. After dark, it was time for Adili, the truck driver, to kill a sheep. He is a Uygur of over 40, with thick brows, large eyes and a darkish skin. He climbed onto the truck, seized one of the two sheep, hung it up by tying a noose around its neck and then tied up its four legs. He asked us to find the west with a compass, turned the

October 1, 2000

'Little Shanghai' ➤ Sanlongsha ➤ Aqike Valley

The sleeping bag performed very well last night. I didn't feel cold at all. Only some dust got into it. I woke up three times during the night. Each time I opened my eyes, all I saw was stars. I even saw a meteor.

After seeing the sand formations in Sanlongsha this morning, we passed by a gold mine in the wide-open Gobi. There was not a single tree in sight. A miner walked



towards us looking tense. He probably presumed that we were up to no good. When I smiled and nodded to him, the tension gradually melted away. The miner is named Zhang, a man of over 30 years of age, from Gansu Province. He had been working in the gold mine for many years and earned only 500 yuan a month. Long years of work in this barren land must be lonely and monotonous. After I had a photo taken with him, he repeatedly asked me to send a copy to his folks at home. I could see from his face that he was homesick. Before we left, he shook my hand and gazed after us until we were out of sight. The look of longing on his face has been haunting me ever since. (A few months after I returned to Hong Kong, I received a letter from Zhang. He had returned home from Lop Nur and was very pleased to have received the letter and photograph I sent him.)

This evening, we waited for a long time by a dune but could still see no sign of the truck. We were told later that the truck had been bogged down in the sand. We had to gather at the truck's site. After supper, we went into action to rescue the truck. It had sunk deep into the sand up to one-third of the wheels' height. Together, we unloaded the water barrels, spare wheels, food and many other items first and cleared away the sand in front and behind the four wheels with spades. Then we pushed from behind the truck, but the wheels spun and the truck refused to budge. We repeated this twice to no avail, then decided to change tactics. We dug a gentle slope behind the wheels and started to push the truck backward from the front. At the sound of the group leader Zhou Xinwei's whistle, we shouted, "One, two, three!" The truck eventually came out of the sand. There were cheers, applause and hugs all round.

To celebrate our success, Zhou invited us to drink some beer and red wine, declaring that everybody can sleep in peace, as there

will be no "morning call" tomorrow. We all had a drink and spent an enjoyable evening together.

Note: A guide had warned us to erect the tents away from the sand hills, where there was a biting insect. To rescue a bogged down vehicle, fresh saxoul should be put under the wheels, as dry saxoul branches will not work.

October 2, 2000

Aqike Valley ⟶ Edge of the desert ⟶ Kumkuduk (Where Peng Jiamu was lost)

Over these last two days in the desert, it has been a common occurrence for a jeep to be marooned in the sand. The worst event

1. **The convoy crawling forward in the desert has to be constantly on guard against sinking into the sand.**
2. **Having a meal in the Gobi.**
3. **Yadan formations are transformed into works of art by the setting sun.**
4. **Pushing a motor vehicle out of the sand.**
5. **The 40-plus members of the Hong Kong tour group.**

(which was returned later). The air around us seemed to have congealed. Luckily, after asking for instructions from their command, they permitted us to pass through and sent a military jeep to escort us out of the base. The whole thing took nearly two hours, so it was already dark by the time we left. From Driver Xu we learned that the truck had become immobile again, with no hope of being repaired today. We had no choice but to leave Adili in Lop Nur for the night until a mechanic comes tomorrow.

October 6, 2000

Barracks ➤ Korla ➤ Urümqi

We started out again, before the vehicles behind us had caught up. It would take about four hours to drive to Korla. The asphalt-paved road ahead assured us that there would be no more bumping.

Upon reaching Loulan Hotel in Korla in the afternoon, we couldn't wait to wash ourselves. The water dropped from my hands turned brown and the shampoo refused to produce any lather. The shampoo was not to blame — we hadn't washed our hair for six days. By the time I was finished, a dark brown layer of sediment sat on the bottom of the bathtub. Stranger C, my roommate, and I each took two photographs, one before and another after our bath, as souvenirs.

By this time, Jeeps No. 9 and 10 had just arrived from Lop Nur. Little did we know that they had had a narrow escape from death. After 11 p.m. last night, the two jeeps lost their bearing. They searched in vain for the tracks of the leading vehicles for two hours. At daybreak, the radiator, fuel gauge and speedometer on both vehicles had broken down. The situation was alarming. They wanted at first to retrace the road back to the forbidden military zone because they would rather risk being arrested than die in the desert. Driver Zhao has been driving in the Lop Nur area for more than 10 years. He is able to find his direction through his senses more accurately than using a compass. It was he who eventually succeeded in leading the two vehicles out of Lop Nur.

We are all very pleased to see them back, safe and sound.

October 7, 2000

Urümqi ➤ Lake Tianchi ➤ Urümqi

We went to see Lake Tianchi during the day and held a victory celebration party this evening, at the Mukamu Song and Dance Hall frequented by Uygurs.

On the tourist bus, Zhou Xinwei showed on a VCD player the best parts of the videotapes made by photographer Yang during the seven days and six nights of our tour. Since everybody made his or her own contribution to the rescue of the truck, we have become closer in our hearts. I have never been so deeply impressed as in these last few days by the friends I have made and the things I have seen and experienced.

Lop Nur, I am sure we shall meet again some day!

1. Playing the circus in the desert.
2. Saxoul is a hardy plant.

Information: China Travel Service (Hong Kong) organises an exploratory tour of Lop Nur in the autumn every year. For more information, visit the Website at http://www.chinatravelone.com or call (852) 2835 3715

About Lop Nur

Lop Nur in the eastern part of Qaidam Basin, the largest basin in China, was originally China's second largest salt lake. After the Tarim River changed course and the Peacock River stopped flowing, it dried up completely in the 1960s and became a desolate wilderness. The weather there is extremely dry and changeable. The annual rainfall is only just over 30 mm, but the amount of evaporation exceeds 2,000 mm. There is a temperature variance of over 30 degrees Centigrade in a day. In this harsh natural environment, no living things can survive except the wild saxoul and hardy wild camels. Lop Nur is, therefore, known as "the sea of death". The death of Peng Jiamu, a Chinese scientific investigator, and Yu Chunshun, a Chinese traveller, in 1980 and 1996 respectively, have cast a dark and mysterious veil over Lop Nur

neck of the sheep towards the west, bowed his head and mumbled a prayer. With one slash of the knife, he cut the throat of the sheep. As fresh, red blood spurted out of the wound, the sheep convulsed a few times and stopped. It was too horrible to watch.

The mutton soup was delicious, though it had a strong mutton smell. The mutton was originally intended for making shish kebab. As the sheep have been reduced to a pack of bones after all these days of bumping on the truck, exposure to the hot sun in the day and cold at night and without enough food and water, the meat wasn't suitable for shish kebabs. Adili was a Muslim. Since he was not sure that the knife for slaughtering the sheep was Muslim (having not been used for killing a pig or dog, which the Muslims consider unclean), he refused to eat the mutton.

We never expected that Xu would allow us to try driving in the desert. Since obtaining my driving license three years ago, I have never driven a car with manual gears and had almost forgotten how to do it. After a momentary adjustment, I started to move the jeep forward in first, second and then third gear. As the jeep rolled along in the desert at high speed, I was overwhelmed with excitement. Some other members also had a turn at the wheel after me.

This afternoon, we drove into the alkaline area at the centre of Lop Nur, originally a salt-water lake with a very high salt content. After the water had evaporated, the salt and soil had crystallised and formed a very hard surface, which cracked in the heat of the sun. Even though the crystallised surface was not very thick, it didn't break, not even when we stamped hard on it. It was very bumpy to drive on. The vehicles shook so violently that most of the members chose to get out and walk.

It was 2 a.m. by the time we reached the centre of Lop Nur. Many members of the group went to sleep even before we all finished our supper.

was to this place that he came alone in the month of June when the temperature was over 50°C. The temperature on the ground surface could reach as high as 80°C. As I looked at his grave and the spot where he fell, my heart was filled with sadness.

After 5 p.m., we came to a spot surrounded by sand hills that provided shelter from the Gobi wind. As the truck had not yet arrived, members of the group sat around, chatting or writing diaries. A People's Liberation Army vehicle drove over from the distance. A few soldiers came down and began to walk towards us, their faces grave. Some of them even carried guns. The atmosphere immediately became tense. The two Hong Kong team leaders were called over to answer questions. When they came back, we discovered that the spot where we were waiting was inside a forbidden military zone, inaccessible to anyone without a permit. Soon, more vehicles drove over. All of us were told to get down. After dividing us into three groups, the army men took photographs of us all and told us to hand over our gear, including even a Swiss army knife

Note: In the desert, water means life. Where to find it? Driver Xu told us that one way of finding water is to follow the footprints of wild camels, which are the size of a grapefruit. Camels can detect the presence of water over a long distance.

October 4, 2000

Lighthouse in the Gobi ➤ Centre of Lop Nur ➤ Memorial tablet at the centre

At sunrise today, the lighting was good for taking photographs. We stood on the undulating sand dunes to take photographs of the silhouettes, mimicking scenes and characters in films, such as "Martial Art on Mount Huashan" and "Huang Feihong Meeting Sneak Attackers". Each time someone created a new pose, we all had a good laugh.

October 5, 2000

Centre of Lop Nur ➤ Dragon Town ➤ Forbidden military zone ➤ Abandoned barracks

This morning, we came to the grave of Yu Chunshun, a legendary figure and a great man in my estimation. I looked around the boundless empty Gobi and realised that it

1. The weirdly shaped and fascinating sand hills forming the Little Shanghai add some interest to the bleak wilderness.
2. Peng Jiamu, a scientific investigator, was lost here in the summer of 1980.
3. The badly cracked bed of a formerly brimming river.
4. Yu Chunshun travelled on foot to Lop Nur in 1996 and lost his life in the abominable weather.

NEW ATTRACTIONS

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Tamsui:
A Short Hop from Taipei

Photos & article by Diane Bennett

After the bustling streets of downtown Taipei, my travelling companion and I decided it was time for a slight change of pace, with an excursion to the northern fishing town of Tamsui. Using Taipei's fast and efficient MRT system (Tamsui is the last stop on the mostly overhead Tamsui line), we embarked on a fascinating 45-minute journey offering ever-changing vistas of spectacular pagoda-style hotels, myriad temples and ornate burial grounds auspiciously nestled within the lush tropical hills.

Upon arrival, we exited the station to discover a palpable feeling of leisure and space that seemed so rare in central Taipei. With the aim of uncovering some of Tamsui's historical heritage, we walked along the shores of the Tamsui River, where fishing boats, emptied of their morning catch, were lined up at their moorings, each jealously guarded by obviously well-fed gulls and kingfishers. In the distance, a host of wading birds picked their way through the mud flats, hunting for juicy titbits. The smell of fish and seafood wafted invitingly from a huddle of tiny sea front restaurants that were punctuated, now and then, by small rustic dwellings and tiny temples.

Fort San Domingo — a Landmark of Tamsui

Clearly a popular seaside destination for urbanites, Tamsui was filled with day-trippers. They strolled along the waterfront, happily tucking into generously heaped ice creams and other local snacks, evidently enjoying the relaxed holiday mood. Towards the end of the harbour promenade was a row of smart bistros, and it was at this point that we caught our first glimpse of Tamsui's European influence. We made our way uphill to Fort San Domingo, one of the town's most famous landmarks.

Built in 1629 by the Spanish — and successively occupied by the Dutch, Chinese and British — the fort is strategically positioned on a hilltop with commanding views of the sea. Known to the locals as Hung Mao Cheng — or Fort of the Red-haired Barbarians — the fort is an imposing presence, its distinctive russet-hued facade complemented by a legion of polished cannons. This fine example of colourful Iberian architecture looked at its best against a thick foil of greenery, which, mercifully for us, offered plenty of shade from the baking midday sun.

Once we had surveyed the exhibits inside and imagined life as seafaring merchants in an unfamiliar land, we moved on to the equally impressive residence of the erstwhile British Consul. With period furnishings still intact, it was easy to picture how its former occupants must have enjoyed sipping tea in the afternoon and gazing through the archways of the veranda at the beautifully landscaped gardens. A nimble squirrel caught our eye as it darted between the trees, stopping to feast on small buds.

Just a few steps away, the old Tamsui Oxford University College boasts an extremely attractive campus, replete with more elegant red brick buildings and fragrant trees. A more tranquil setting so conducive to study would be difficult to imagine. After rambling through its extensive grounds, we had worked up an appetite and decided to return through Tamsui's lively high street for a spot of lunch, but not before pausing to admire the extravagant beauty of Matsu Temple, with its colourful and intricately carved eaves.

Since very few old buildings remain in central Taipei, Tamsui, with its charming harbour and unusual architecture, made for a rewarding side-trip, giving an insight into a bygone age and serving as a reminder of how Taiwan earned the Portuguese name of Ihla Formosa (beautiful Island). With aching feet, and yet our spirits curiously rejuvenated by the fresh sea air and leisurely calm, we returned to the buzzing metropolis.

Fort San Domingo, built in 1629, stands as a landmark of Tam

area between Guangdong and Hunan provinces. On its terraced land grown with luxuriant bamboo groves, lies a natural lake with a water surface of 1.3 hectares. Over the past five years, Chen has been struggling to build the area into a natural and environmentally friendly tourist attraction.

Stories Everywhere

At long last, I met Chen Jian and saw his prairie. Early one morning at about 5 a.m., our party of 15 people walked out of the Chenzhou Railway Station. There Chen Jian was, dressed as a farmer, holding the meeting board. He looked kind, modest and courteous, with a welcoming smile on his face.

After being treated with local beef noodles for breakfast in a small restaurant, we boarded a minibus to drive to our destination two and half hours away. Chen pointed out the attractions on the way, using literary quotations and legends. Initially, I suspected that all the names and stories referred to those spots, such as "the pair of lovers beside a waterfall" and "a tortoise falling down into the valley", were created by Chen. However, I later discovered that these scenic wonders, such as brooks, gorges, primeval jungle and stone forest landforms, which had been lying in slumber for thousands of years, seemed to have become alive after Chen Jian gave them relevant literary names backed with legendary stories.

In 1988 and 1989, Chen Jian rode across China alone on a motorcycle. Five years ago, unexpectedly, he came across this beautiful and extensive prairie near his hometown. Inspired by what he saw, he made the decision to end the business of his decoration company in Chenzhou and sold the shops three months later. He then invested all his money in purchasing a 50-year lease on the prairie. From then on, Chen put all his energy into the development of the land. In order to preserve the grassland, he refused to set up buildings there or allow motor vehicles to enter. He also refused to allow a TV tower to be built within the scenic area, declining the offer for free electricity as an exchange. Following his own intuition, Chen built several dreamlike scenic spots, including Ancient Fortress and the Fading Moon, Overseas Windmill and Heavenly Pillar Tower. It is hard to imagine how many difficulties he must have overcome to realise his own dream. When we followed his advice and admired the unique beauty of the landscape, he showed great delight.

In the afternoon, a bright sun was shining over the prairie and the sky was deep blue. Chen forecast a beautiful sunset that evening. After our

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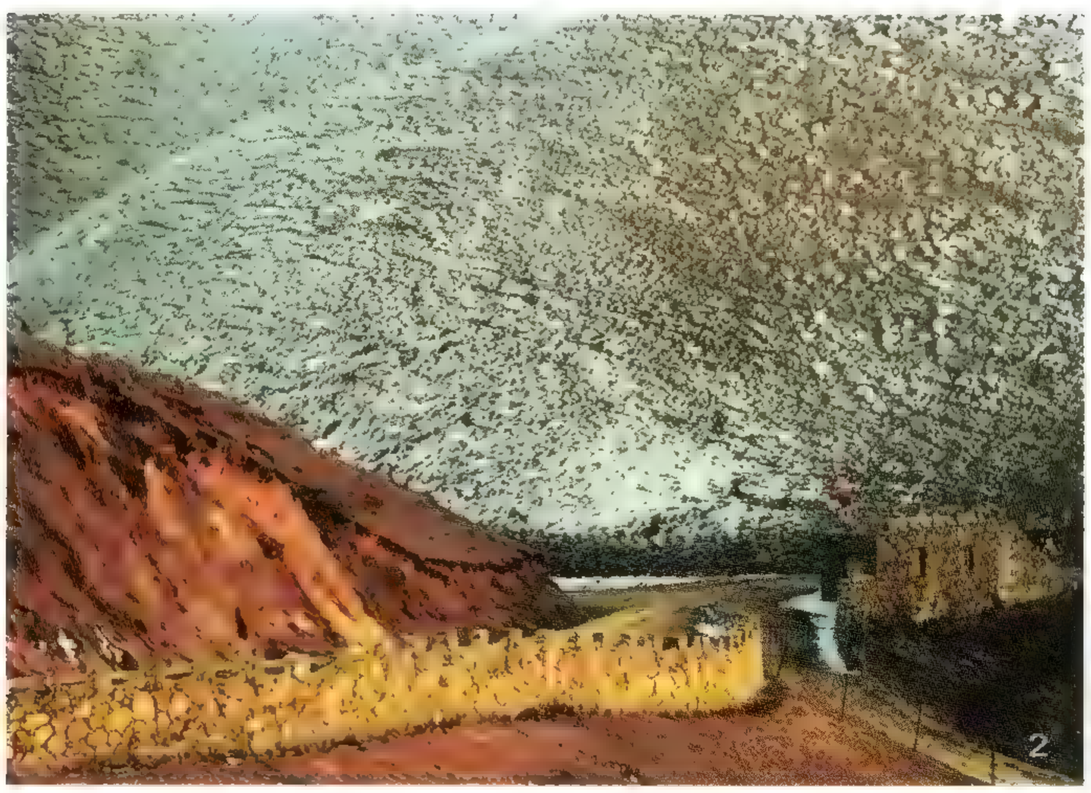
1. An ice fall found in winter.
2. A road winding into the scenic area.
3. After the first snowfall.
4. Mist drifting in the primeval forest.
5. The Stone Forest covering six square kilometres.
6. Horses grazing freely on the grassland.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Yangtianhu Grassland

A Prairie in Hunan

Photos by Chen Jian Article by Zhang Cong

On the border between Hunan and Guangdong provinces lies a highland on which you can see terraced grassland, stone forests, azalea groves and a tranquil lake. Its winter scenes wrapped in ice and snow are stunningly beautiful.

Chen Jian and His Prairie

Even though I had never visited the Yangtianhu Scenic Area, I knew I already loved it. It was as if my soul and the grassland called to each other. For so long, I had been fascinated by the descriptions of the prairie in newspapers and on the Internet: "In spring, azaleas grow all over the low hills, as beautiful as rosy clouds amidst a vast expanse of mist. With the coming of summer, a south breeze gently brushes the grass and rolling hills, while oxen and horses roam the terraces, creating a charming and pleasant scene. In autumn, reed marshes, winding bridges and flocks of birds bathing in the moonlight form an enchanting sight, while in winter, on the snow-covered fields and slopes, thick mists rise continuously like layer upon layer of clouds, affording a magnificent view. At night, lying in bed by the lake, you can see the bonfires, so bright that they melt the starlight reflected in the water...." The poetic charm captivated me and attracted me to the beautiful prairie.

Later, I discovered that these descriptions were composed by a man called Chen Jian, and that this new tourist scenic spot is virtually the product of Chen's own vision. Not a very populous tourist spot, the area has only ordinary hills, ordinary water and ordinary soil — a paradise for local farmers when they herd sheep and cattle in the slack farming season. The highland stretches 40 square kilometres on the border

1. The prairie in summer is ideal for romance.
2. Yangtian Lake at dusk.
3. A gorgeous winter scene on the highland.
4. A belt of azaleas lies between the forest area and the grassland.

Yangtian Lake

The dark green Yangtian Lake lies on the top of Qitianling in the Nanling Mountains stretching from west to east in South China. Covering an area of 1.3 hectares and at an elevation of 1,350 metres, the lake is a crater of an extinct volcano formed during the orogenic movement during the late Quaternary Glacier Epoch. It is fed by underground springs. Reeds and moss grow thickly around the lake's rim.

Heading northward from Pingshi of Shaoguan, you come to Yizhang of Hunan Province. Continuing along State Highway 107 and turning left at Liaojiawan, you will soon see layer upon layer of terraced fields in the valleys, where villages nestle here and there in the gullies.

The winding sandstone road gradually crawls deep into the mountains. After passing Honghua Village, you can see a narrow gorge some 100 metres deep. A stream leaps from the cliffs to form a subterranean waterfall with a drop of 78 metres. At the base of the fall, vapours rise and rainbows dance in the sunshine.

Around 10 a.m. is the best time to catch the cloud sea enveloping the mountain and drifting along the valley. Mountain villages, which occasionally appear between the clouds, seem to be floating with the clouds. Going deeper into the hills, at an elevation of 1,300 metres, you find broad-leaf and conifer forests. Between the forests and the grassland lies a 300-metre-wide forest of azaleas with fiery-red blooms.

Where Horses Run Wild

The Yangtianhu Prairie is a terraced land carpeted with liver moss and grass. It is quite different from the boundless grasslands in the north. Here, you will see obscured hills, marvellous formations of cloud and mist, and lush grass, where herds of oxen and horses graze.

There used to be an army horse-breeding farm on this grassland in the 1950s. The ruins of the stables can still be found here. The local people now raise their horses in a natural way. Instead of herding them, they allow the horses to graze and mate freely. Very often, when the horses return to their owners, a baby horse is found among them. Besides the "free horses", there are also "free oxen" and "free sheep" that are raised in the same way.

An Air of Enchanted Mystery

Below Pintou Village, at an elevation of around 400 metres above sea level, lies an area of karst stone formations that covers six square kilometres. Festooned with creepers, the plinths stand between 20 and 60 metres in height, and occur in a variety of fantastic snapes, some snow-white, others jade-like.

In the heart of the grassland, lies a 1,000-metre-long gorge. With jagged cliffs of grotesque shapes on both sides, the bottom is buried in luxuriant flowers and grass. The chirping of rare birds and the murmuring of stream give the gorge an air of enchanted mystery.

To visit the huge Yangtian Buddha, you need to drive to Manaotang (or Xijiang) Village, and then walk three kilometres. The sleeping Buddha is located on a cliff in front of you, 1,000 metres away, at an elevation of 1,277 metres. There is a two-storey temple at the top of the mountain. The Buddha seems to be lying on the mountain and facing the east.

Frost Flowers

As the highland is located on the north edge of the Nanling Mountains, it turns bitterly cold from

1. A plank way built on the marshland.
2. The stone formations appear in various shapes.
3. Blooming azaleas form a major attraction to tourists.
4. Practising martial arts on a thrilling venue.
5. The campsite built by the lake.

long day's trek, we were being treated to local delicacies in a log cabin restaurant. While we were eating, Chen climbed up to the cabin roof to check out the view. Unfortunately, dark clouds suddenly appeared in the western sky. Chen stared at the sky for a long time, praying for the miracle that would disperse the clouds and present us with a glorious sunset.

No Unsightly Power Poles

There is no electricity on the prairie. The bonfire burning in the pitch dark appeared even more splendid. The soft light lit every face. Though we were strangers to each other, we were gathered here through our common love of natural scenery. This realisation filled my heart with an inexplicable emotion.

At 7 a.m. the next morning, I was still fast asleep in an inn built like a farmer's courtyard house, when Chen called us up to see a wonderful sunrise. Before some lazy bones could turn over and go back to sleep, he made his second "morning call" so that none of us in the group would miss the extraordinary view.

Chatting with Chen by the lake was a lot of fun. He told us how he had spent 250,000 yuan to build a hydropower dam. He had enlisted the help of local farmers, but before the dam was put into use, it suddenly collapsed. The reason was the inexperience of the local people. But he said that he did not regret giving the project to them, his fellow villagers.

"Why didn't you find some skilled workers?" I asked.

"How can I resist them when they ask for a job? Now, I don't have to feel indebted to them," said Chen.

"Well, do you plan to rebuild it?"

"Of course. The tourists need electricity."

Chen said that he plans to lay the cables under the ground, so that the scenery will not be affected, though the cost will be four times that of erecting power poles.

EDUCATIONAL TOURS

When considering taking a trip, there are many different options from which to choose. The range extends from sightseeing and cultural tours to those designed for thrill seekers and outdoor enthusiasts.

Some tourists, however, choose a different way of travelling, so as to allow themselves the opportunity to be genuinely involved in the environment they visit — to be the inner force rather than an external factor — thereby producing a more interactive climate. One such experience comes from Educational Tours.

The Days as a Volunteer Teacher in a Mosuo Village

Interviewee: Ms. Luk Po Kau

Position: A Hong Kong resident who volunteered to teach in Yongning County, Yunnan Province

CT :(*China Tourism*): Why did you choose to spend three months as a volunteer teacher in Yongning?

Luk : Everything happened purely by chance. Early last year, I was hospitalised as I had to undergo surgery. Before I had recovered, I was given notice of layoff from my boss as a result of a cut in staff numbers. With neither my health nor my job in a stable condition, I suddenly felt quite relaxed, as if there was nothing that couldn't be given away or set aside. Then a dream from my childhood years came to the fore — to go back to my native place to teach. After I was discharged from the hospital, I planned to go and help the school at my hometown in Zhaoqing, but then I heard that Mr. Chou needed someone to teach on a voluntary basis in Yongning. So I left for this poorer area in the last few days of August.

CT :Weren't you worrying about yourself since you had just been discharged from hospital?

Luk : Nothing is more important than being able to help others. Besides, I had the help and encouragement from my family and friends. So I didn't hesitate. But I knew absolutely nothing about the place before I left Hong Kong, nor could I find any information on it.

CT :Why didn't you consult the service department of our magazine (laughing)? Apart from you, was there anyone else involved in the teaching assistance programme?

Luk : Within the first group, there were two other girls, one from Guangzhou and the other from Sichuan. We all chose to teach in different schools, but the other two stayed longer than I did.

CT :What was your everyday life like?

Luk : After I arrived there, I was lucky enough to be sent to live with a Mosuo family, where I was given less spicy food than normal, which they prepared especially for me, such as potatoes, corn, yak meat, fish and noodles. It took me half an hour on foot to school. The other two volunteer teachers were less fortunate than I. One lived in a place where there was no electricity and she had to chop firewood to cook her food. And the other lived a long way from her school and had to spend an hour to get there.

We taught with local textbooks in standard Chinese. Classes were held five and a half days a week, from 8:30 in the morning to 4:30 in the afternoon each day, with a lunch break for the kids to go back home to eat. I was responsible for the math, fine art and natural science classes at Yongning Primary School. I also taught English in Yongning Middle School. Each class had some 30 students. During the vacation, I enjoyed visiting the students at their homes to understand how they lived and what

Ringing the "bell" to call the students to classes.

Children in the mountains study with very poor facilities.

A school in the mountainous area.

early December to February when the cold currents from Siberia arrive. The landscape covered with ice and snow displays a different kind of beauty.

Motor vehicles travelling onto the highland in this season must fit chains to their wheels, and should be accompanied by a guide. Driving 15 km westward along the Chenzhou-Guilin Highway, then turning south into the mountains, and passing Yuefeng Township, you will be in a cold world with sleet showers. To the south, as you pass steep cliffs, you will see a huge rock towering into the sky like an immortal holding a baton to show the way.

Approaching the transitional belt to the grasslands, you will find a wonderful world of ice and rime. Long icicles hanging on the branches form a magnificent scene of ice sticks and ice falls. On the ground are "ice flowers" in various shapes, formed by water droplets oozing from the sandstone and freezing as they come into contact with the cold air.

Southern China has a temperate climate, and ice and snow vistas like this are seldom seen. The stunning winter scenes of snow, rime, ice, icefalls, frostwork, ice swords and ice curtains are really precious to people living in the south.

Translated by Jin Jianzhong

Tips for the Traveller

Admission:

Yangtianhu Prairie Scenic Zone (Mountain Gorge included): 30 yuan; Tianhu Stone Forest: 20 yuan; Hongcun Waterfall, Bamboo Sea and Terraced Fields: 20 yuan; Yangtian Sleeping Buddha: 25 yuan; Pingtou Village: 20 yuan; Primeval Forest: 10 yuan; Azalea Forest: 10 yuan

Accommodation:

90 yuan/room for 2-3 persons; 60 yuan/large tent; 40 yuan/small tent; 10 yuan/bed.

Transport:

Yangtian Lake is 370 km from Guangzhou. If you are driving by yourself, after passing Yizhang county town, drive 18 km north along State Highway 107, turn left (west) at Liaojiawan onto a mountain road. A drive of 6-8 km will bring you to the terraced fields, 19 km to Yongchun Village, and 31 km to the fork at Chayuantou, where you take the right road. A further 5 km along the mountain road will take you to the campsite of the Yangtianhu Prairie.

Yangtianhu Prairie Chenzhou Reception Centre:

Tel: (735) 225 3588, 223 3787, 13007350624;
Fax: (735) 223 3787;
E-mail: cz163@chinese.com

Organised Trips:

1. One-day tour: Meet at the Chenzhou Railway Station at 7:30 a.m., visit the Hongcun Waterfall, terraced fields, Flying Centipede, Azalea Forest. Have lunch at the Yangtianhu Scenic Zone headquarters. Visit Tianhu Mountain Gorge and enjoy the grassland scenery in the afternoon, and return to Chenzhou. Cost: 88 yuan/person
2. Two-day tour of the prairie, the gorge and choice of Stone Forest or Pingtou Mountain Village: Day 1: Ditto, stay at the villa for the night, with evening bonfire party. Day 2: View the sunrise. After breakfast, visit scenic spots; have lunch at Yangtianhu Log Cabin Restaurant; return in the afternoon. Cost: 198 yuan/person
3. Two-day tour of the prairie, the gorge and the Sleeping Buddha: Day 1 and Day 2, as above, plus the visit of the Sleeping Buddha. Return to Chenzhou in the afternoon on Day 2. Cost: 218 yuan/person
4. Three-day tour of the prairie, the gorge and choice of one more scenic spot (Sleeping Buddha, Pingtou Village, or Stone Forest): Day 1 and Day 2: as above. Day 3: After breakfast, visit scenic attractions and return to Yangtian Lake, have lunch, and return to Chenzhou in the afternoon. Cost: 308 yuan/person
5. Winter tours are organised from early December to the end of February. Tourist routes and contents are as above, but an additional 50 percent will be charged for each trip.

A Charity Tour in Guizhou

Author: Chan Yat Nin
Position: Deputy editor-in-chief and senior journalist,
China Tourism Press, Hong Kong

Three years ago, by pure coincidence, I became acquainted with the Ge people in Guizhou.

Entrusted by the Guizhou Tourism Administration, people with the Ping'anjing Tourist Resort situated on the Ping'an River in Guiping County took me on a trip along the river, where a very unique ethnic group, the Ge, lives. This was something I had always wanted to do. Full of curiosity, I trudged through the mud into Wangba, a village of the Ge people. The residents here were extremely hospitable. Looking beyond the beautiful costumes and lively singing and dancing, I noticed that the children studied in a wooden building that was distinctly lopsided and had no glass in the windows. One teacher was required to be in charge of students of several grades. In this village with a population of more than 1,000, the number of students was surprisingly small, since many school age children could not attend school because their families were too poor to afford it. I also learned that the young waitresses in the tourist resort began to learn how to read only after they got their jobs at the resort, because their families could only afford to pay for the education of the boys.

The author with students of the Ge people.

To break the vicious circle of poverty, education had to be the key. Perhaps I could do something for the Ge people.

Six months later, I was finally able to bring to the village a gift — a donation from Hong Kong Ming Yuan Foundation to help rebuild the village school. The vegetable garden of the village Party branch secretary was to be the site of the new school. The old Party secretary pulled a radish from his garden and pealed it for me. He asked me if I would take some radishes for the chairman of the foundation.

Girls of the Ge people in Wangba Village.

During the construction of the new school, Hong Kong China Tourism Press organised a tour group of 40 people to visit Chong'an River and also attend the Miao people's Sisters Festival. I was a co-leader of the tour, and this time we went to a more remote village called Fengxiang. Landslides along the way made it impossible for jeeps to drive and most people had to cover the last seven kilometres of mountain path on foot.

Left: Students at Fengxiang School in class.

Right: Tour members donating stationery to Fengxiang School.

Fengxiang is twice the size of Wangba and the school here was in better shape. The school's two-storey brick

poor farmers might have a permanently gloomy face, but here I found that they had a more carefree life than we did. Compared with big city dwellers, people here had fewer complaints, and did not fight among themselves.

We were all very reluctant to leave the house of the village head, but I remember one thing he said: "Since I am the village chief, I will have to set a good example to others. No matter how hard it is, I will send my kids to school so that they can live a better life than mine!"

On the third day, we went to Bamao Central School to play games with the students there. We all enjoyed it very much. I discovered differences between these kids and those in Hong Kong. Here they cherished the opportunity to be with us and did not really care what prizes they received from playing the games. From the cards written with their wishes, I found that what they wrote tended to be things people normally treated as trivial, but they gave readers a sense of real warmth. For instance, one wrote, "I wish our elder brothers and sisters from Hong Kong good health and a happy life!" Another card also touched me with these words: "I hope to become a pop singer and make a lot of money so that our family life will be happier and I can go to school!" I had always thought going to school was something just taken for granted, but here going to school was a luxury and a dream in the eyes of these kids.

We stayed for five days in Baojing and then went on to Yongshun County. In all, we visited several dozen farmers' families, seven or eight primary schools and a key middle school. From our visits to farmers' homes, I came to understand how they struggled in life. What moved me most was the visit to the Xiang brothers in Huzi Village. When four other members and I arrived at the Xiangs' home, it was drizzling. We saw not a single domesticated animal outside the house, which brought us to the conclusion that the family must be very poor. When we entered the house, the little brother in his thin clothes knelt down in front of us and kowtowed to thank us, crying as he did so. As I looked around, I came to know what it really meant to describe a house as "so poor that there was nothing but four bare walls". Several wooden planks heaped together amounted to what they called home. I wondered how they could withstand the cold weather in this environment.

Mrs. Xiang seemed very uncomfortable. It turned out that when she was struck by a spell of epilepsy last year, she fell on the fire and got badly burned on the back. The family was too poor to obtain medication for her. I felt the tears beginning to well up and it was painful to stay there any longer.

It takes an hour for some of the students to reach their school.

Devoted Teachers in the Mountainous Area

After Hong Kong's return to China in 1997, I wanted to have a better understanding of our compatriots on the mainland. Since then I have taken part in three educational tours.

Hunan is located in southern China and all my past knowledge of the place was limited to its history. I had heard, though, that it was a very mountainous region, where life was very hard and the people were rough. But the tour I took there completely changed my impression.

During the six-day stay at Changshou Town, Pingjiang County, what struck me most was the teachers, young, well-informed and enterprising, who had given up the opportunity to find a better job in big cities and instead chosen to work at this place with its harsh conditions and heavy workload. Often they had to use their own money to subsidise students who could not pay for their tuition. Having learned of their experiences, I who had been living such an affluent life, was both moved and filled with respect for them.

From visiting farmers in their homes, I learned real friendship and what it means to be content. Trips to primary schools made me understand the importance of training people and made me give up my "selfish ego" and devote myself to education with love.

When the local people from Changshou thanked us for our gifts and concern, I also felt grateful to them for having given me the invaluable experience of growing up and cherishing the future.

Service Without Boundary — Hunan Mountain Experience Plan Website: http://home.lovehk.com/jac3

CHINA EDUCATION GROUP, STUDENTS' UNION, HONG KONG UNIVERSITY

Introduction: *This is a committee under the Students' Union of Hong Kong University and also a charity organisation registered with the government. The goal of the group is to allow all its members to become more aware of and more concerned with education in China. It hopes that students can gain personal experiences and help improve education in China.*

Services: *The group functions in four main areas, including research, planning, fact-finding tours and fund raising.*

Add: *2A01 Fong Shu Chuen Amenities Centre, Hong Kong University, Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong;*

Tel: *2546 8432; Email: hkusucec@hotmail.com;*

Website: *http://hkusuc.hku.hk/hkusucec*

Lighting the Flames of Hope in the Hearts of Children

Editor's note: One day, a friend sent me a postcard, printed not with beautiful scenery, but with a partial image of a classroom. On the back of the postcard were these words: "Cold wind blows in through the cracks on the board, on which Teacher Shi uses a piece of chalk to write the multiplication table in neat handwriting."

The publisher of the postcard was the China Education Group of the Students' Union of Hong Kong University. So I contacted them and received their warm response and willingness to talk about a unique travel experience.

Author: Amy Pun
Position: Member of China Education Group, Students' Union, Hong Kong University

Upper: After visiting a student's home.

Lower: The children treasure more the chance to be with us than the prizes they win in the games.

have not written any letters for four to five years, as I normally communicate with my friends through telephone or emails. Now I am writing again, to my young friends in Hunan.

January 9 this year was the day I left for Hunan. At the time, the weather was warm in Hong Kong but I had to add to my luggage a thick eiderdown coat. I did not go with an ordinary tour group, nor did we have guides or a luxurious coach. We did not stay in five-star hotels either. This was a study tour whose participants had to pass a test. Our destination was Baojing and Yongsnun counties in Hunan Province, where we would visit sma l friends in rural areas, visiting the schools there and supervising the use of the assistance from the China Education Group of our university.

On the first day, we arrived at Baiyun Airport in Guangzhou very early and took a plane to Zhangjiajie. From there we took a bus provided by local education bureau officials. We rode for three hours before checking in at the hostel of Baojing County. Early on the second day, we visited the Qianling Primary School. Until then, we had always thought schools in this part of China must be very dilapidated, but the school in front of us turned out to be quite adequate, witn a laboratory, an equipment room and even a computer room. It left a deep impression on us and gave us more to think about in comparison with many other poorer schools.

Later we visited farmers' homes. This was the first time I had ever been in the countryside. For those of us who had been born and brought up in Hong Kong, this was a rare opportunity to come into contact with such graceful country scenery. The people in our tour were divided into five groups to visit two villages. I was sent to visit Dongluo Village in a remote area. First, we had to walk on foot for an hour and then rode in small boats to the vil age. As the boat sailed in the misty air between rolling hills, I gaped at the charming scenery. I had never experienced anything like it before.

At Dongluo Village, a few others and I were greeted into the house of the village head, while other tour members went to the homes of young friends who have received our assistance. This was the most enjoyable night of the entire trip. I had never expected the people in Hunan to be so hospitable and sincere. In the evening, the village head prepared a great feast for us. From our talk with the village head that evening, I came to appreciate their ability to be content with what was available. Before I had come, I thought that

difficulties they had.

CT : What did the local people think of you?

Luk : They were surprised and excited that a woman had come from Hong Kong to their place to teach. At the beginning, students even imitated me in trying to speak the standard dialect with a Cantonese accent. When we became familiar, they enjoyed my teaching method, assisted with singing, which greatly increased the attendance rate.

CT : What were the most memorable things during the three months you worked as a volunteer teacher?

Luk : First and foremost was the kindness of the Mosuo people. I am really moved by their warmth and trust in relation to strangers. Living among them, I rediscovered the pure level of exchange that is essential to humanity. Their values are also different from ours, in that the goals they pursue are not material or financial, but rather the harmony and unity of the family. The longer I stayed, the more I was moved. The impact upon me reached such a degree that I have since acquired new angles on the significance of life.

The students are interested in their volunteer teacher from Hong Kong.

Apart from the good impressions, there are also things that worried me. The development of tourism has suddenly created a major influx of tourists, which has given rise to unexpected disturbances. The most common and worrisome thing is "good intentions with bad results". For instance, tourists from relatively wealthy regions want to try their best to help the local poor people and money seems the easiest shortcut. Many people think they are being helpful, but forget that if improperly done, they have not only failed to help the real people in need, but a so create adverse consequences. I have seen too many examples of this with my own eyes. So I think the local people and tourists should both adjust their perspective. The donor should spend some time learning about the real situation and letting the recipient know that they have to do their share.

CT : What are your suggestions to friends who want to offer assistance to Yongning?

Lu : They can send their donation to the account of the Education Fund of the Mosuo Mountain Region, Yongning, Yunnan. Volunteer workers of the fund will allocate the money according to actual need and follow up the programme. Those who want to go as volunteer teachers should stay for three months or more. They can get in touch with local volunteer workers directly for practical arrangements and let the schools make the appropriate arrangement. This way, you can avoid disrupting the normal operation of the schools and display the true spirit of helping others.

YUNNAN EDUCATION FUND OF THE MOSUO MOUNTAIN REGION

Introduction: *This is a pure non-governmental assistance project of co-operation between friends enthusiastically concerned about education in this part of the world and local teachers. It aims at helping kids in this poverty-stricken mountainous region to return to school and encouraging the local people's enthusiasm for education.*

Services

- *Project A: Assistance to Yongning Middle School — to pay, for three years running, for half of the tuition of each student from grade one to grade three.*
- *Project B: Individual assistance — to help primary school students who are poor and good in their studies and ethics to finish their six-year primary course.*
- *Project C: Volunteer teaching programme — all friends who are interested in being volunteer teachers in Yongning please contact local volunteer workers: Add: Ms. Gaoah Dashilacuo, Yongning Township Government, Ninglang County, Yunnan, Postcoade 674309; Tel: (888) 586 1235; Email:wschou3@hotmail.com/ alingmac@sohu.com*

Donations should be remitted directly to the independent account for the Education Fund of the Mosuo Mountain Region of Yongning, Yunnan.

Bank of operation: *Agricultural Bank of China, Ninglang Branch;*

Bank account holder: *Education Fund of Mosuo Mountain Region, Yongning, Yunnan;*

Bank account number: *801041 (Project A); 801042 (Project B)*

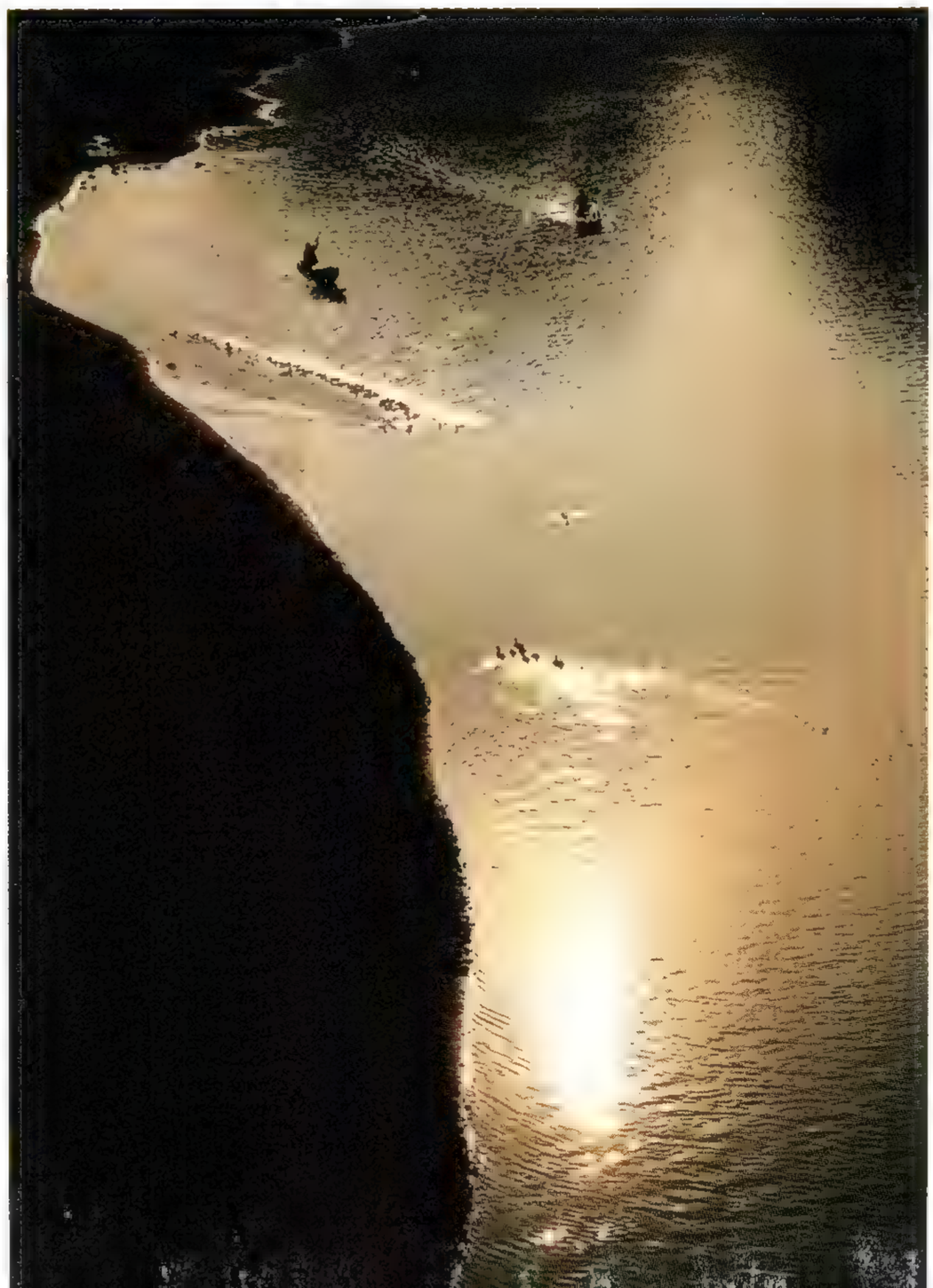
An early summer morning on Lijiang, Lens: AF 24-85/f3.5-4.5; Aperture: fll; Shutter: 1/350 sec.

First Prize: Fisherman's Song on the Lijiang River by Chen Minsheng

Winners of The First Kodak International Guilin Landscape Contest

We received a wonderful response to the photo contest. Over several meetings of the selection committee composed of representatives from the Guilin Tourism Bureau, Hong Kong China Tourism Press, Guangxi Potographers' Association and Kodak Company, 80-plus outstanding pictures were selected. You'll see all the winning photos during the exhibition tour.

* The Guilin Tourism Bureau will inform all winners directly.



Second Prize: Lijiang Fantasy by Jin Zhifang

At Sunset, on the bank of Lijiang.

building had students from all the surrounding villages within a radius of several kilometres. The tour members had pooled more than 10,000 yuan with which we bought stationery, dictionaries and books to give to the school and the students. The Chongxing Township government, which oversees Fengxiang, and the village school together held a solemn ceremony to accept the donation. Warm chatting followed the ceremony, with people from diverse backgrounds comfortably exchanging ideas. Upon learning that there were orphans and disabled children in the village, some tour members could not hold back their tears and right there decided to provide long-term assistance to these children for their education. There were also tour members who donated money to the school on site.

The old building of the former Wangba School.

The Sending Help to a Mountain Village programme was only a side itinerary of the trip. Unexpectedly, it plucked the chord of love among tour members to an enormous degree.

Last year, our press organised a Miao New Year Tour, which also included the Sending Help to a Mountain Village programme. Members of the tour again donated stationery, teaching materials and money to Fengxiang School. After returning to Hong Kong, some of them still kept the Ge people in their hearts and mailed them some clothes. From the bottom of my heart, I thank these tour members.

Recently, the new building of Wangba School — a two-storey brick and stone building — was completed and the school changed its name to Ming Yuan Wangba School. When I heard the news, I wished I could go immediately to take a look at "our" school, but I was too busy with office work to go. All I could do was think of the school from afar. I can tell how the school looks from the picture, but there are so many questions on my mind: Do they have enough desks and teaching facilities? The sole teacher of the old school won't meet the demand, as it gradually draws kids from the neighbouring villages as well. How should they solve the problem that despite the new school, some kids from poor families may still lack the money to attend? What has become of the two orphans for whom I provide financial assistance?

I have also been thinking how wonderful it would be if a foundation could be set up to support the poor students to attend school. In fact, in the Ge villages, tuition for a student is just around 300 yuan a year. And then there are the poorly paid teachers. If there were adequate financial support, more people would be prepared to teach in mountain schools.

I must find an opportunity soon to revisit Wangba and have a good look at "our" new school.

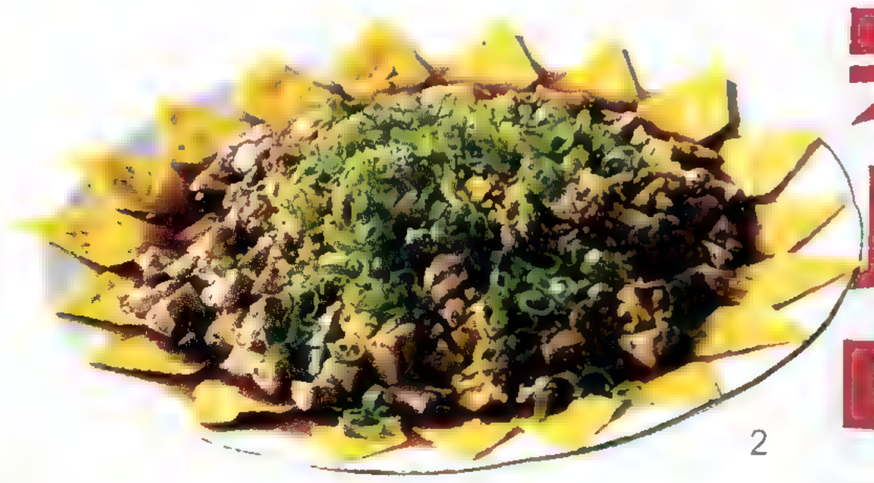
Translated by F. Huang

Readers interested in knowing or helping basic education in poverty-stricken areas in China, please contact the following institutions:

Sowers Action
Add: 3/F 115 Woosung Street, Kowloon, Hong Kong
Tel: 2597 4739
Fax: 2597 4731
Website: www.sowers.org.hk

World Vision Hong Kong
Add: 2/F Mayfair Centre, 4 Anchor Street, Tai Kok Tsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong;
Tel: 2394-4101;
Fax: 2394-0566;
Website: www.worldvision.org.hk

Oxfam Hong Kong
Add: 17/F China United Centre, 28 Marble Road, North Point, Hong Kong;
Tel: 2520 2525;
Fax: 2527 6202;
Website: www.orfam.org.hk



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JIANMEN BEAN CURD
Favoured by a Tang Emperor

Photos by Liu Guangfu, Liu Chenping
Article by Zeng Hong

At a time when "tall trees turn to the colour of green jade, and ten-thousand branches are weighed down by tender leaves", we came to Jianmen Town, an ancient strategic post beneath Jianmen Pass known as "The Impregnable Pass under Heaven", in Sichuan Province.

Abundance of Bean Curd in Town

Soon after we arrived, we noticed that the girls in Jianmen are particularly fair complexioned. Their faces are white touched with pink, smooth and delicate. When viewed from a distance, they look like the lotus flowers just emerging from the water. When asked the reason, the local people answered proudly: "Just try our Jianmen bean curd. The water from the Jianmen Mountain is very nourishing!"

There are so many bean curd shops in Jianmen Town. If you stroll along the one-kilometre-long street, you will find shops everywhere selling nothing else but Jianmen bean curd. We counted them roughly, and there were 103! Local people told us that these shops are all open 24 hours a day and they sell nearly 100 tons of bean curd a year. In other words, 100,000 kilograms of soya bean are consumed annually in the making of bean curd. In this small town, a total of 480 people are involved in the bean curd business.

Meritorious Service Rendered by Bean Curd

Jianmen Pass is renowned for its strategic location and legendary history. Similarly, Jianmen bean curd has its own stories to tell. In 263, the Kingdom of Wei sent troops to attack the Kingdom of Shu. Commanded by generals Zhong Hui and Deng Ai, the Wei troops approached the Jianmen Pass. The Shu soldiers, led by General Jiang Wei, held the strategic point firmly, but eventually became weary, their steeds absolutely spent. The pass was in imminent danger. Just at the critical moment, someone made a suggestion: ask every local household to make bean curd, so that the soldiers can have some nourishing food and their steeds the bean dregs. A few days later, the soldiers regained their strength and their horses became sturdy, and the army's morale was greatly boosted. Commanded by Jiang Wei, the Shu troops dashed out of the pass to spring an attack on the invaders and rapidly defeated the 100,000-men Wei army. And so the saying goes that "Jianmen bean curd saved the kingdom of Shu".

In the Tang Dynasty (618-907), when An Lushan and Shi Siming started a rebellion, Emperor Xuanzong, Li Longji, fled in panic from the capital city Chang'an, heading westward and facing numerous difficulties. When he reached Jianmen Pass, the local gentry treated him with Jianmen bean curd. He tried it and found it to be very much to his taste. So he named Jianmen bean curd "Imperial Bean Curd".

How Does It Taste?

History is after all history. If you want to know how good Jianmen bean curd is, you have to go and try it for yourself.

We went to Jianmenguan Restaurant, which was said to be the largest bean curd restaurant in Jianmen Town. There we met the second-class cook Wei Cuilian and her apprentice Wang Zhenggong.

On the mountain in early morning.

Third Prize: Cloud Sea on Miao'er (Cat) Mountain by Lin Wenhong

Third Prize: Sunset on Lijiang River by Kisanuki Tetsuya

On a terrace in Xingping, Guilin.

Third Prize: Busy Lijiang by Yang Jian

Second Prize: Auspicious Snow by Jin Zhifang

On the terraced fields in Longsheng in early winter.

The Appeal of Peking Opera

Nobody should visit Beijing without going to a show of Peking Opera. The quintessence of Chinese culture, Peking Opera is held in high esteem throughout the history of Chinese opera and performing arts as a whole. Over 200 years, several generations of star singers have emerged, helping to create the on-going development and popularity of Peking Opera.

Both in their early 20s, they had been working as chefs for several years. They told us they had more than 130 different recipes for bean curd dishes. Then Wei took up a chunk of bean curd with her left hand and a knife with her right hand and started to slice skilfully. As the knife rose and fell in her hand, the bean curd turned into small pieces of different shapes: dices, slices, slips, squares. In a short time, a banquet of bean curd dishes was ready. The sweet smell, bright colour and varied shapes of the dishes made our mouths water, and we wanted to try all of them in one gulp.

It All Depends on the Water

Strangely, bean curd made by the same method in other places tastes quite different from that in Jianmen. Was it to do with tne location? We asked the local people about it. The answer was unequivocal. They told us that the soya beans must be grown in the local fields of conglomerate oil sand; the bean milk is ground with 400-year-old stone mills; and only the water from the Sword Spring is used.

The Sword Spring lies close to the entrance to Jianmen Pass. In ancient times it was the place to water horses on the 40 km travel route from Zhaohua to Jianmen. Tests have found that the Sword Spring water contains abundant minerals. That is why the bean curd made with the water is extraordinarily tender and tasty.

In Jianmen Town we met Yang Jide, who was nicknamed "Bean Curd Yang" by the local people. Thin, small and plainly dressed, he was a man of few words. What surprised us was that such an ordinary man took the lead in founding his private bean curd shop and prospered from the bean curd business. He told us that as the demand for bean curd was increasing day by day, the traditional grinding method with stone mills was too slow, so now he had changed to electric mills. Today, his family alone could grind 80-90 kilograms of soya bean a day, and they raised 40 big pigs on the bean dregs.

Bean Curd as Souvenirs

When those who come to visit Jianman have the opportunity to taste the delicious Jianmen Bean Curd, they always think about taking the bean curd back home to share with relatives and friends.

We leamed that the local people have been producing pre-packed bean curd noodles, various kinds of preserved dried bean curd and fermented bean curd, in addition to canned food cooked with bean curd. The colour, fragrance, taste and shape were just the same as the bean curd dishes freshly cooked in the restaurants. When they were offered on sale at the promotional conference held in Chengdu, capital of Sichuan Province, they were warmly welcomed and sold out quickly. Some customers travel a long way to Jianmen to place orders.

Translated by Xiong Zhenru

1. Jianmen people soak soya-beans in the water and then grind them into milk using a stone mill. (by Liu Chenping)
2. Sunflower Doufu, a dish made with bean curd. (By Liu Guangfu)
3. The delicate Huaitai Bean Curd. (by Liu Guangfu)
4. Boiling and filtering soya-bean milk. (by Liu Chenping)
5. The 72 Jianmen Peaks. (by Liu Guangfu)

1

2

Peking Opera is also unique in its handling of time and space. Whether the action takes place indoors or outdoors, in a garden, under the moonlight, on a battlefield or in a boat sailing on a river, it is the actresses and actors who convey it to the audience through their gestures and movements. For instance, an actor, with a horsewhip in his hand, makes a few rounds of the stage with light, rapid steps to indicate that he has been galloping on his horse for dozens or perhaps even hundreds of kilometres. A few soldiers led by a general may represent an army ten thousand strong; and doing a few formations on the stage indicates they have marched a long distance.

What is also unusual for a stage art is that in Peking Opera, the character may speak directly to the audience, relating to them what is on his or her mind, totally ignoring the other characters on stage. Sometimes, two different events supposedly taking place in two different places may be acted out on the same stage simultaneously.

The Music in Peking Opera

It is the music that decides the rhythm of action on the stage, and it is the percussion instruments, the drum, gong and

Emergence and Growth

Two hundred years ago, in 1790, a robust and stout-hearted Anhui Opera singer by the name of Cheng Changgeng arrived in Beijing from Qianshan County in East China's Anhui Province. At the time, the ruling Qing Dynasty was in rapid decline and the country was falling victim to foreign invasion. Cheng, who usually sang in a deep and resonant voice, playing the roles of just and trustworthy officials and courageous generals, hoped through his art to arouse the corrupt ruling class from their life of debauchery.

He might have failed in that respect, but as an opera star, he became very popular in the capital, and was instrumental in the establishment of a new opera form, the Peking Opera. His foster son, Tan Xinpei, who was outstanding in character portrayal, breathing life into the numerous roles he played, developed a singing style more melodious and varied in rhythm and modulation.

Among Peking Opera artists of the following generation, the celebrated Mei Lanfang (1894-1961) is unquestionably the finest representative. Using less force in his singing, Mei's aesthetic pursuits enabled him to greatly enrich his repertoire and performing style.

For many centuries, as the political and cultural centre of China, Beijing was the meeting place for different kinds of local opera from all over the country. Despite its parochial name, Peking Opera is in fact a merger of several local operas from other parts of China, including *Huiju* from East China's Anhui Province, *Hanju* from central China's Hubei Province, *Qinqiang* from Shaanxi in the Northwest and *Kunqu* from Jiangsu. Through a process of interchange and assimilation among these and Beijing's local *Jingdiao*, there finally emerged a highly comprehensive art form, which combines music and dance, singing and recitation, and acrobatics. It is literature, music, dance and fine arts all in one, and was given the name *Jingju*, or Peking Opera.

Unique Features of Peking Opera

A Peking Opera singer is required not only to sing, but also to recite and act. The stage characters are very much divorced from real life and the recitation is quite melodic. Actions and gestures are performed with stylised, symbolic dance movements to mean, for instance, opening or closing the door, opening or shutting the window, ascending or descending stairs, climbing a hill or wading through water.

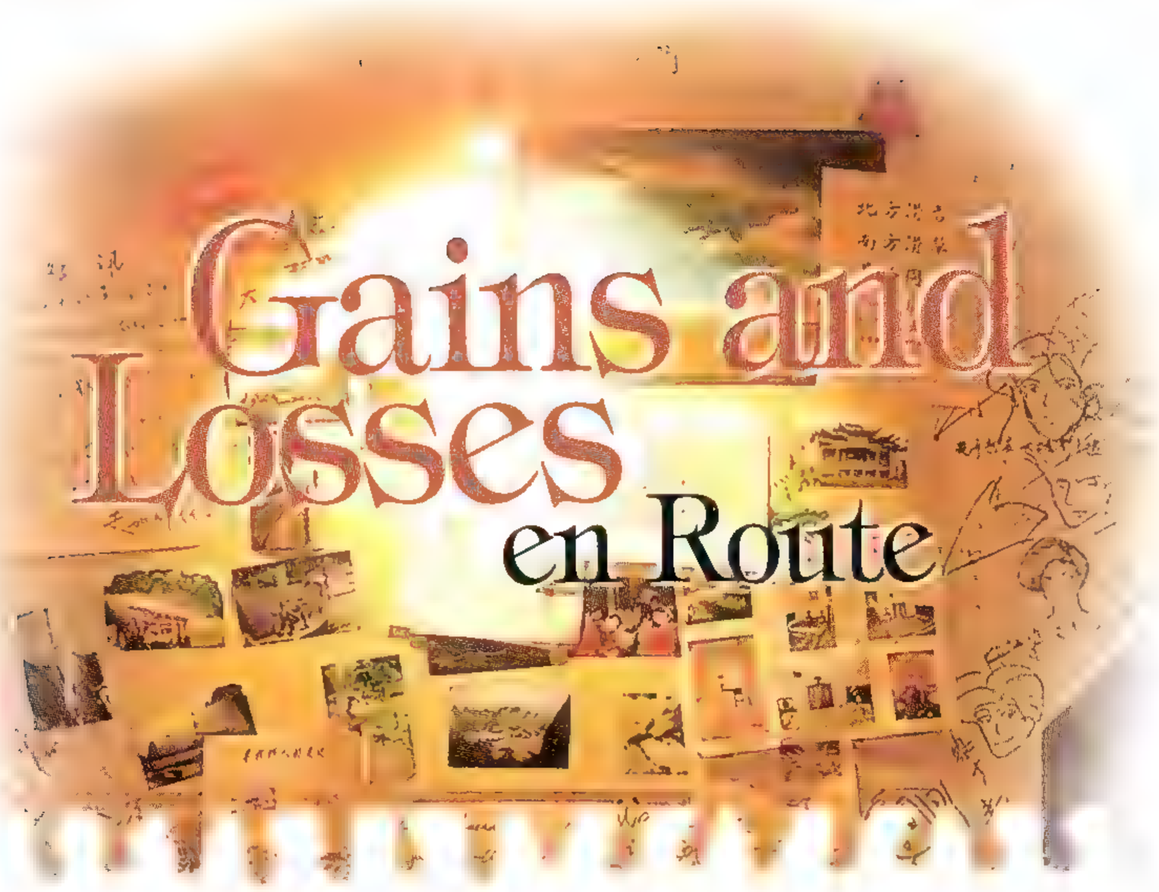
2

Condensed over the years, they form a series of dance movements that are purely exaggerations, but highly refined.

One can often witness on the Peking Opera stage extremely difficult but highly skilled body exercises, an element contributing to the opera's appeal. These contain the elements of acrobatics passed down through centuries and yet are not acrobatics as such. They need to fit in with the development of the plot, help delineate the character of the role and, at the same time, must be in harmony with the other movements in Peking Opera and in step with the rhythm. All this, in addition to the singing, places high demands on the artists.

3

1. "Jing", or painted face, is a role of a gallant general or straightforward man. (by Wang Miao)
2. "Dan" is the general concept for female roles. (by Wang Miao)
3. To be a Peking Opera actor or actress requires great skill in singing, dancing, recitation and performing. (by Wang Wenbo)



Article by Ah Zhi

Bolivia National Day

Bolivia is one of the poorest nations in South America. Most residents there are descendants of the Incas, who established the once magnificent Inca culture. Since the 17th century, Bolivia has suffered severely from imperialism and colonialism. After Spanish rule was ended, the country suffered instability caused by power struggles among different political groups. All of these disadvantages have directly sabotaged Bolivia's economic development. However, the situation has improved slightly over the last few years. This places the Bolivians in a better position to celebrate their National Day, a means of expressing their wish for a strong and prosperous country.

On August 6, 1993, I was fortunate enough to take part in the Bolivia National Day celebrations.

I was staying in Capabena, a town beside a beautiful glacier lake. The streets were crowded with people and stalls, and the entire town was adorned with fresh fruit and decorations. Even the cars were dressed in paper flowers and ribbons.

The celebrations started after lunch. Young men and women wearing traditional clothing danced like butterflies all over the streets. The audience, regardless of age, was seduced by the festive atmosphere and started dancing too. The dress of some elders was more flamboyant than that of the youngsters. Despite their being overweight, their dancing was every bit as good as the youths. Foreign travellers like myself also joined in the dancing party. Afterwards we drank beer with the locals and had the time of our lives.

At night, we went to Midnight Mass in a church. When the bells rang at midnight, people yelled, "Bolivia! Bolivia!" at the tops of their voices. As a foreign tourist, I was truly moved by these people. At the same time, I thought deeply about why I, as a Chinese, identify strongly with my culture yet seem to lack this same commitment towards my country.

Stepping on the colourful papers left on the streets the next morning, I was already on my way to the next port of call.

Article by Jessica

The Young Xinjiang Guy

Five years ago I went on a tour to Xinjiang with my friend Bill. We passed many remote grasslands and villages on the way, eventually stopping at a place called Baluntai. At night, we stayed in a military post, the safest place for visitors. Since there were only a few guards posted there, they were excited about having us there, and were eager to help us.

In such an unfamiliar mountain area, the night was especially long and dark. We couldn't get to sleep. So we took a few candles and some beer and peanuts to a playground where we sat around, celebrating my birthday in a simple way. The candle's flicker attracted a shy soldier. We invited him to sit with us, and chatted generally about our lives. He was 16 and came from a small village in Sichuan Province. He still had a few years to go before leaving Baluntai. We had a long talk, and when we eventually fell silent, I looked at the stars in the sky and really began to feel what it was like to be the wanderer in a strange land. Though nobody uttered a word, I felt our hearts were close and genuine.

When I look back now, I realise I was just someone passing through who felt sentimental at the time. How could I really feel what the Sichuan boy would have to go through during his service in Xinjiang?

On the following day, we left very early. But the young soldier woke up much earlier than we did. As I carried my bag out, he gave me a bottle of water and a letter. He asked us to read the letter after we were gone. In the letter, he called us "Brother" and "Sister" and himself "Xiao Di" (Little Brother), and expressed his happiness at having met us. The letter was written roughly, but we felt he was very sincere.

Back from Xinjiang, Bill and I continued our work as before. And through the letters we received from Xiao Di, we heard about his life and work, how he moved from service guard to messenger soldier, learned to drive in the Korla military region and returned home years later. We also read about all his sorrows, and his hopes for the future. In my letters I always advised and encouraged him. However, every time he mentioned looking for a job in the South, I would become sensitive. I thought he was too aggressive and not naive anymore, and besides, I was afraid that he would ask for my help and bring me problems. Thus, I told him how hard and ugly city life was, and advised him to focus on his present job. My feelings were complex after finishing each letter. I really couldn't tell at the time whether I was being honest or not.

When we first met, we were merely strangers and wouldn't have asked anything of each other, so why should that change? It seems that once we return to the reality of our own environment, the friends we made during a trip really belong in their far-away places. They should also stay in the wonderful memories that give us something to smile about on a bad day.

cymbals, that decide the rhythm of the music. The percussion also serves the purpose of creating a strong dramatic atmosphere. This is particularly true in scenes depicting battles and hand-to-hand fighting. Percussion instruments are thus referred to as "martial music" in Peking Opera.

"Civil music", on the other hand, refers to the strings: *jinghu, erhu, pipa, yueqin, sanxian*, etc., and the winds: flute, bamboo pipes, *suona*, etc. These are usually employed to accompany the singing, although sometimes they provide segments of music to enhance the drama.

There are two kinds of modes, or systems, in the opera's vocal music, namely *xipi* and *erhuang*. Each of these modes includes melodies and rhythms, or beat patterns, which vary in accordance with the emotion of the character portrayed. Generally speaking, *xipi* is lighter, faster and more sprightly, appropriate for dialogues, while *erhuang* is marked by a slower tempo and often used to depict a stirring, melancholic mood. Therefore the latter is more suitable for expressing inner thoughts and deeper emotions.

The Basic Roles in Peking Opera

There is much exaggeration in Peking Opera costumes and facial make-up, with the emphasis not on resemblance or truthfulness, but rather symbolism and decorative purpose. Likewise, the props are there for decoration or to serve as a symbol, and are extremely simple.

There are four basic roles in Peking Opera, namely "sheng", "dan", "jing", and "chou". Within each category, there are yet more detailed divisions classified according to the sex, age, personality and social status of each character. With the exception of painted-face characters, the male roles in Peking Opera are collectively known as "sheng". Among the subgroups, there is "laosheng", who are generally men of letters who behave with composure and have a calm mind; "wusheng", who are usually warriors appearing in battle scenes; and "xiaosheng", who stand for all young male characters. The general term for female roles is "dan". Again, it has many subgroups. The "qingyi" represents the good matron, faithful wife or filial daughter. The huadan is a role for a vivacious maiden or a woman with a frank and open personality; the "daomadan" and "wudan" are mounted women soldiers in armour or skilled in martial arts; and the "laodan", usually elderly women. The "jing" are the painted-face roles, representing warriors, heroes, statesmen, adventurers, and demons. The "chou", or clowns, are the roles portraying foolish, awkward or stingy people. This type of role can be recognised by the patch of white painted around the eyes and nose.

3

The most outstanding of Peking Opera singers, Mei Lanfang, Zhou Xinfang, Cheng Yanqiu and Shang Xiaoyun, all abided by the artistic conventions of this superb art form, but did not refrain from absorbing innovative ideas. Thus each created an artistic style of his own. Their contributions to raising Peking Opera to the high level it eventually attained are immeasurable.

Translated by Zhang Qingnian

4

1. Fascinatingly difficult movements are often performed in Peking Opera. (by Liu Liqun)
2. A mask of Peking Opera represents the character's status and personality. (by Wang Miao)
3. "Chou" is a clown, whose acting often draws laughter from the audience. (by Hu Weibiao)
4. "Wusheng" in the "sheng" category refers to brave soldiers or martial art masters. (by Wang Miao)

Article by Luo Lijuan

Robbery in Europe

One year in May, I travelled to Spain and Portugal with my husband. On the fourth day we arrived in Madrid. In the evening, we went to photograph some night scenes with three other members of the group. The huge, magnificent buildings, lively statues, and colourful fountains were mesmerising. When we were returning to the hotel at about 11 p.m., a strong force suddenly pulled my handbag from behind my back. The bag was already gone before I knew what had actually happened. I kept chasing the thieves, shouting for help as I ran. But I eventually watched them disappear into a dark alleyway. My husband and two other members then arrived, telling me that their bags, too, had been robbed, and they had even been assaulted.

At the same moment, two Spaniards passed by and helped us call the police. Quite surprisingly, we found that there were about 20 people waiting in the police station. Our tour guide arrived at midnight, and told us to ask our families to facsimile the copy of our passports to the hotel. It was already 2 a.m. by the time we were able to return to our hotel and get some sleep.

The tour guide came to our room at 6:30 a.m. the next morning. He gave us US$500 and a map with the British Embassy marked on it. Since the rest of the tour group would continue the trip as planned, we had to apply for visas by ourselves. Also, the hotel we were staying at was full, and we had to be transferred to another one. He reminded us that we could still catch up with the tour by rail if we got our passports back within three days; otherwise we would really have to give away the trip.

As I was having breakfast with my husband, other members of the tour group came to console us. Some of them voluntarily lent us money, totalling several thousand US dollars. Some even offered to lend us their mobiles, and luggage keys, in the hope that we could use one of the keys to open our own suitcase. We were moved but politely declined their kind offers. Afterwards, we went to the British Embassy. My husband gave his name, and the staff had good news. Our passports had been found and we could collect them from the military camp. When everything was settled and we returned to the hotel, I was told that my handbag had also been found and sent to the new hotel. I was relieved to see that despite the US cash having been taken, our Hong Kong dollars, passports, flight tickets, credit cards, and keys were all still there.

We informed the tour guide that we would catch up with the tour after lunch. Upon leaving, the owner of the Taiwan restaurant instructed a staff member to take us to the railway station. We started out at 11 p.m. and arrived at a small town at 7 a.m. the next day. The other members and we were all very glad to see each other again; it was just like meeting up with old friends.

Following this experience, I have come to a better understanding of the saying, "a friend in need is a friend indeed", and my faith in humanity has also been restored.

Article by Forget Me Not

A Ten-year Pledge

In 1987, we three girls toured to Guilin in Guangxi during the Easter holiday. On the return trip, we met a few poets in the carriage of the Guilin-Guangzhou train. They were in fact on their way to attend a conference. We got to know each other quite well during the 18-hour train ride. Our poor Mandarin was the object of great amusement to them. Luckily, we loved writing and they were also curious about life in Hong Kong, so we had a lot of fun talking to each other, though sometimes, we had to write the words on paper to express ourselves.

One of the poets wrote a poem for us, based on the colours of the clothes we wore. He described us as "Golden Chrysanthemum", "Scarlet Red Bean" and "Bluish Forget Me Not". Another man, a Nanjing writer, also recorded our encounter in his new poem, which he later included in his new collection. I clearly remember how excited we felt when we received the book in Hong Kong and found ourselves depicted in it.

As they left, we promised to meet up 10 years from then, which would be in 1997 after Hong Kong returned to China. They would be able to enter the land of Hong Kong via the Lohu entry port. I continued to exchange letters with the Nanjing writer, but lost contact after a couple of years. It seemed that the pledge and memory had gradually faded in our minds.

When 1997 came around, I chose to take the newly opened Kowloon-Beijing and Kowloon-Shanghai trains to visit Beijing and Shanghai. After my visit to Shanghai, I travelled to Nanjing, recalling the 10-year pledge. I had kept an old name card, but unfortunately, the office had already moved to a new site. With the help of the others, I found out his new work address and the phone number of his home. After making a series of efforts from the afternoon through to the evening, I finally heard a familiar voice on the line that brought me incredible joy. Later, when I saw his shadow appearing in the dark, I nearly burst into tears. We did not become any closer in this short reunion, but we were both moved to see former associates and recall old times.

Red Bean died in 1995 when I was travelling in Xinjiang. My sorrow at not being able to say goodbye was what had urged me on to fulfil this 10-year pledge. I felt as if she was by my side, achieving it with me. Red Bean, my good friend, I will always miss you.

Contributions Solicited

We are grateful for the warm support of our readers who have sent us their contributions. Please remember that you are always welcome to write to us about your various travel experiences so that you can share them with other readers. You can write about your impressions of a place, episodes of a trip, or encounters during a journey. The story for this column should be no more than 800 words. A full-length story of 1,000-1,500 words with good photos may be published in another column of the magazine, "Traveller's Corner".

Please mail your story to: English Editorial Department, Hong Kong China Tourism Press, 24/F Westlands Centre, 20 Westlands Road, Quarry Bay, Hong Kong, or send it via Email: edit-e@hkctp.com.hk.

Thoughts of Train

Article by Xu Feng

Ten or more years ago, when I traversed the Silk Road, the railway was almost the only means of transport. And one single route may have taken up to tens of hours. Taking a train was challenging and meaningful, but definitely not an opportunity for enjoyment or relaxation. The number of passengers usually exceeded that of available sleepers or seats. Tickets bought were merely permission to board the train. Whether it was a blessing or a curse to be on the train depended entirely on your sense of adventure, your experience and your perspective.

Soon after boarding, I quickly looked for a place to store my luggage. Of course I chose the luggage board first, to avoid having to put my things under the seat or in the aisle. On fine days, the knapsack would only be a little bit dusty, which could be easily remedied with a light beating. During rainy days or if it was stored near the tearoom or washroom, however, the bag would be wet and muddy for the whole day. What was worse was that the train attendant would sometimes "clean" the floor with an unbelievably filthy mop. It was a nightmare to have to carry such a "muddy duck" afterwards! Since then, I always remembered to prepare a big plastic bag whenever I went on a trip.

After storing the luggage, I had to find a seat, otherwise I would have to remain standing and be jostled by others for the whole journey. I retreated to the point between the two carriages, where I was able to sit on a small chair I prepared. But as more and more people got on the train at later stations, the tiny corridor became increasingly crowded. Sitting on the small chair, I was unable to stand up and stretch my legs, and all I could see before me was people's hips.

The most difficult time came when night fell. Everybody slept in whatever way they could, sitting on or beneath the seats, on the floor, or on their luggage. I constantly dozed and woke up, aware only of my tired and powerless limbs. This felt like the worst case of fatigue I had ever encountered. But compared with others who were forced to rest under even worse conditions, my so-called "tiredness" was indeed insignificant. There was a man sleeping beside the water container. He did not respond to people who accidentally dripped hot water on his head, or someone hitting him as they passed, or the attendant who emptied the rubbish bin beside him, or even a broom sweeping his face on two occasions. I couldn't help wondering: "Why is he doing this? Is this a test of his spirit and courage? Or a training programme he set himself to foster a strong will?" I spent the whole night thinking about these questions, unable to fall asleep again. I was still looking for answers by the time the passengers had left and new ones arrived, bringing with them new stories to share.

A Car Accident on the Plateau

Article by Li Zhaoji

Last autumn, caught up in the "Go West" spirit, I decided to head off on a solo trip to the west of China. My plan was to tour Qinghai, Tibet and Sichuan over two to three months. Starting from Guangzhou, I headed northwest to Golmud, taking a short break in Lanzhou and Xining en route.

Whilst staying at the Golmud Hotel, I got to know Zhou Zai, who came from Foshan in Guangdong Province. We hired a taxi together and set off on our trip on a freezing cold morning. A few hours later, we botn began to feel the benefit of the extraordinarily fresh air on the highland. By 12 noon, we had passed the Kunlun Mountains and the Tuotuo River, and were just a few dozen kilometres from the Tanggula Mountain Pass, the highest point of the Qinghai-Tibet Highway. We started to feel nervous and excited.

It was at this crucial moment that everything changed! Our car failed to avoid a pothole in the road and went out of control. It was thrown off the road and onto the slope, where it rolled over and over. My left arm was hurting and I felt blood on the left side of my face; the altitude sickness made things even worse. My body felt as if it were being torn apart.

When Zhou Zai and the two drivers got out of the car to check for damage, I rolled out onto the pasture.

One of the experienced drivers told me that it was dangerous to remain at an altitude of 5,000-plus metres for too long. He flagged down a passing lorry to take us to the nearest town. Fortunately, my arm didn't seem to be broken.

As I sat there in the compact cab of the lorry, the wonderful landscape along the way was completely obscured by the aftershock of the accident. The only thing I felt very lucky about was that we hadn't collided with another vehicle or any posts, and we had just turned over on a slope and not a cliff. Otherwise....

We finally arrived at Nagqu, at 3,800 metres above sea level, at about 6 p.m. With a dizzy head and an injured arm, I checked into a budget-blowing luxury room. Zhou Zai prepared a lavish supper for me, which he fed to me personally. I was very moved by his kindness.

We left by the same lorry early on the following morning, by which time I was feeling a bit better. Eventually we arrived at Lhasa at about 7 a.m. Due to a lack of time, I had to rationalise my itinerary. I spent four days in Lhasa and cancelled tours to places such as Xigazê and Nyingchi. Together with three travellers from Fujian Province, I hired a jeep to visit Nam Co, a sacred lake for the Tibetans. However, we did not get there because the jeep broke down half way. Reluctantly, I made my way to the Gongga Airport in Lhasa. By now, I was able to carry a bag weighing 10 kilograms. My interest in travelling was soon rekindled once I reached Chengdu, capital of Sichuan, from where I went on to tour Jiuzhaigou and Huanglong, two World Heritage sites with stunning scenery.

A month later when I returned to Hong Kong, the doctor told me that my arm was slightly broken after all, and that it would recover in a few months.

Naxi Hunters in Lijiang

Photos by Li Zhixiong Article by Hua Yu

Lijiang is a natural hunting field, with various animals of prey in the forests on the high mountains; wild birds, pheasants and foxes in the bushes; and aquatic birds in the lakes, ponds and marshes. This environment richly endowed by nature has given rise to the development of a special custom of the Naxi people — hunting by releasing the falcon. When we went there to do research on the ancient Dongba music, it happened to be the hunting season for the Naxi people. Of course, we wouldn't miss the opportunity to go with them.

The place we went hunting was the back mountain in Baisha Township at the foot of the Yulong Snow Mountain. Early in the morning, the hunters waited for us by the road. They were a hunting family, the youngest member only 11 years old. With hounds running in the front, they looked like a team of guards. Standing on the hunters' arms were falcons, each with a golden bronze button on their talon, two snow-white pheasant feathers planted on the tail, and a bronze bell hung on the breast. These decorations were for the hunters to find the location of their bird easily. The hunters wore leather gloves; over their shoulder hung a bag loaded with feed for the falcons. From time to time they used their left nand to smooth their falcons' feathers. The birds seemed comfortable with their owners, who carried an air of pride and contentment. The little hunter got in the van first, taking a hound with him and behaving like a perfect old hand.

After half an hour's driver, we reached Baisha Township, from where we could not drive any further, but had to walk up the mountain. On the mountain lived old Mu Yuan and his family, who made a living from propagating

seedlings.

Here we would cook hotpot dishes and stay for a whole day. As for the actual hunting, newcomers like us were generally not allowed to take part for fear that we were not physically strong enough to follow the chasing team, and, instead of giving any help, would divert the hunters' attention and affect the game. So we stayed behind to prepare the hotpot dishes and watch how the hunting was conducted.

Abruptly, the falcons' cries and hounds' barking broke the silence of the mountain forest and echoed in the deep valleys. "Got it! Got it!" the old men staying with us cried out excitedly. We learned from them that the hunters always let the hounds go first. The pheasant, startled by the hounds, immediately take flight. This is called "the first flight". The pheasant can fly quite far this time, so it is no good letting the falcons go at this point. The hunters keep watching the pheasant flying, and after they spot where the bird alights, they go over to encircle it. The pheasant would then take "the second flight". Now the pheasant, which has lost its strength and become even more scared, cannot fly far. It is time for the hunters to release the hungry falcon, which swoops towards the pheasant at a speed several times higher, the golden bells tied to its breast shrilling, and the two white feathers attached to its tails flashing like two light beams. With a scream, the prey is under the falcon's iron-like talons.

On the open ground, hotpots lay in a row with fragrant smells wafting with the rising steam. In the pots were spareribs, chicken, bean curd, sweet potato and vegetables. The food, mingled with the fresh air of the mountain forest, smelt great. When the hunters returned, tney hung the pheasants on the trees, and the hounds walked in circles around the game as if seeking their reward. The falcons, however, were indifferent to their success, showing disdain for everything. Surrounding the hotpots, we ate and talked and laughed, enjoying the huge feast in the wilderness.

Translated by Xiong Zhenru

Guoliang Village in the Taihang Mountains

Photos & article by Lu Shan

Having a meal with the art students

This is the most enjoyable trip I have ever made. Not only because Guoliang Village is more beautiful than the famous mountains and great rivers, although the landscape of the village is so attractive that it would be easy to forget to go home. Not even because of the places of historic interest that help us recall the past, although the village began its own history as early as in the Tang Dynasty (618-907). It's simply because every inch of the village's mountains and rivers and its sheer vibrancy left me feeling comfortable, relaxed and carefree.

Through the Dangerous Tunnel

Starting off early in the morning from Zhengzhou, we changed buses five times on the way and reached Guoliang Tunnel at about 5 p.m. in the afternoon. About five metres in width and height and a kilometre in length, the tunnel is the only link connecting the outside world with Guoliang Village, located in the Taihang Mountains at the border between Henan, Hebei and Shanxi provinces. It was dug out on the cliffs by 13 young villagers over five years in the 1960s. Since then, the tunnel has benefited the people in this mountain region enormously. Today when people pass through it, they still think of the diggers with gratitude.

As we passed through, we noticed the savage rocks on the unlevelled walls, looking something like a dwelling cave of the troglodytes. Looking out through the two-metre square holes dug on the side wall to let the sunlight in and the water drain out, we saw that the opposite side was a magnificent succession of mountains, hundreds of metres high, with 90-degree vertical brown and barren slopes. On our side, we could see Guoliang Village seated on imposing cliffs. We had to agree it was an amazing feat.

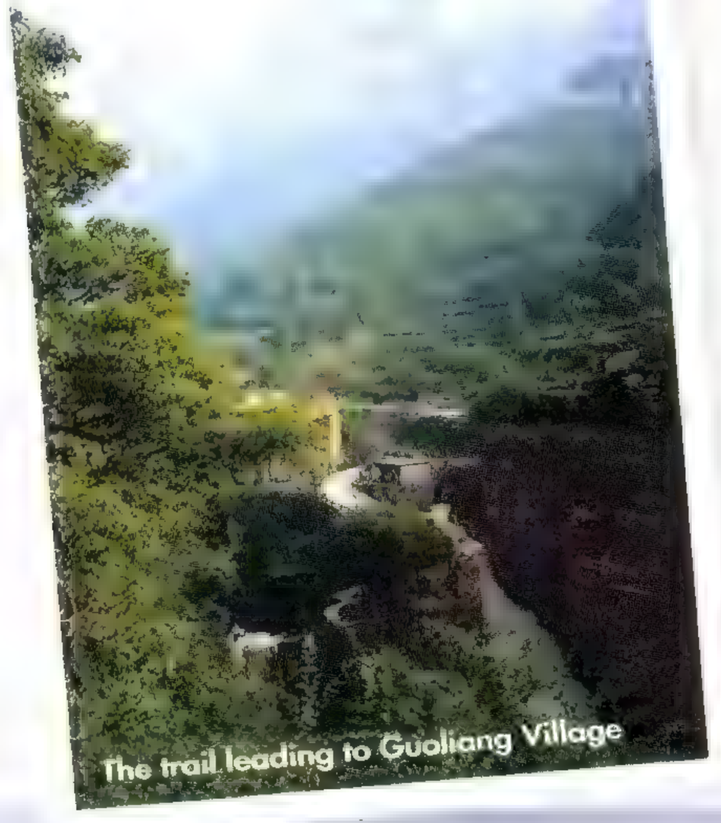
A valley of several hundred metres long has been created between the precipices, scoured by torrential flooding for millions of years. Leaning out to look down the cliffs, we saw water running at the bottom of the valley, which was strewn with heaps of grey boulders. As the river valley wended its way forward towards a big drop, a waterfall appeared. The water sounded distant and booming, and resembled a sheet of soft white silk hanging from a sheer cliff.

At dusk, we reached the small village nestled in the mountains, where the big gorge sloped towards a flat land. At the entrance to the village, we found to our surprise a school canteen. Students were gathered in groups, eating their supper hungrily. Beside the canteen was a large tent, inside which several cooks were busy wielding big shovels to stir-fry bean shoots in a big cauldron. We discovered that the students were from an art college, who had come on an organised field trip to do sketching in the village.

An Ideal Base for Art Students

The villagers told us that Guo Liang was a general of the Tang Dynasty. When his troops were besieged by the enemy army, he and his men camped here and began to reclaim wasteland together with local civilians. Later several villages were formed, such as Guoliang Village, Nanping Village, Huitao (Able to Flee) Village (in honour of their ancestors who had managed to flee the chaos of war) and Zhang Family Village (in fact only one family is surnamed Zhang in the village). In this area, the mountains are carpeted with wild flowers in spring. In summer, many waterfalls form in the valleys and the highest temperature never exceeds 26°C. In autumn, the season I always yearn for, the whole place is a riot of colour, and such mouth-watering fruits as hawthorns, persimmons, apples and walnuts are ripe. When winter sets in, the weather is cold and the ground frozen, and thick snowfall turns the land white, presenting a world you might find depicted in a painting.

The people of Guoliang Village are familiar with the history of their village. In the 1980s, after some artists found the village to be an ideal setting for sketching, the village committee made contact with the art schools in the three neighbouring provinces to establish a base for students to practise their sketching and photography. When students arrive, the village committee would receive them and arrange billets in


The trail leading to Guoliang Village

every household. This small village can accommodate more than 1,000 students at a time today.

Waterfall Like an Ancient Building

We stayed in a farmer's house. When we got up at 6 a.m., it was long after daybreak, so we went out to have our breakfast. The public canteen at the end of the village was buzzing with activity. We bought noodles, corn gruel, steamed buns and pickles. Taking them to the edge of the gorge and sitting on the stones, we tucked into our country breakfast in the fresh morning breeze.

The most popular attractions in Guoliang Village are the two limestone caves, the White-Dragon Cave and the Red-Dragon Cave. After breakfast, my companion and I began to clamber along a nameless valley towards a high mountain in tne distance. The whole valley was filled with huge boulders washed down by mountain torrents over many years; the rumbling sound of the torrents of remote antiquity seemed to be still reverberating in the quiet valley. There were no other people in the vicinity, no path on the slope, only the blue sky, the green mountains and the two of us in a dimension somewhere between heaven and earth. The scenery became more beautiful as we climbed higher and higher. When we reached the foot of a sheer cliff near the summit and hacked our way through a narrow, winding trail, our eyes suddenly brightened up as a ladder-shaped waterfall running down a brown precipice came into sight. The waterfall looked like a huge ancient structure decorated with exquisite carvings. The clear, cold spring water glistened as it ran down the surface of the rock. Caressed by the mountain breeze, we gazed at the transparent spring water and the beautiful scenery below us, completely forgetting where we were.

That evening, we changed our accommodation to the opposite side of the river, staying in one of the several small white houses nestled in the gully. We chose the place because the house was surround by fields of crops and vegetables, and in front of it there was a huge hawthorn tree. The cost was cheap — only 10 yuan per night. At dusk, we sat on little wooden benches beside the man-high ginger plants and gazed across at the crops on the opposite mountain slopes. Happiness was with us, making us feel as if we were floating in mid-air.

Lunch in a Shanxi Village

We got up early again on the third morning. After having breakfast with corn gruel and pickles, my companion and I walked aimlessly westward along a little winding path. The altitude increased as we walked further and further. It was a rural scene all along the way, constantly attractive and vibrant. Even the top of the cliffs was full of life. The crops in the fields such as corn and millet were about to be harvested; hawthorn trees on the roadside were laden with red fruit; persimmon trees covered with scarlet persimmons were dotted here and there on the mountain slopes; walnut trees, already harvested, with their huge emerald leaves sent forth waves of delicate scent. The branches of apple trees were weighed down with fruit, too, and even in the bushes and grass on the roadside some nameless red fruit was growing among the wild yellow chrysanthemums.

We walked with a vigorous stride through the fields, totally forgetting we were city-bred people. But when we turned to look at the edge of the road, the 90-degree drop of the deep valley was virtually underfoot. I suddenly felt dizzy, and my legs turned to jelly at the thought of falling into the deep valley. Just a single false step....

In this region there was no public bus running between villages. When we felt tired and could no longer keep walking, we stopped by the road to thumb down a three-wheeled tractor. Under the driver's brave and skillful operation, the tractor bumped along the rough mountain road. Sitting up there in style, we craned our necks to get a look at the beautiful scenery on both sides along the way, luxuriating in the massage our whole bodies were getting from the bumpy tractor.

Before we knew it, we had reached Kunshan Village in Shanxi Province. By now it was almost noon. We had eaten a lot of hawthorn on the way, and the most important thing now was to find a place to eat. We went to a household with a big persimmon tree in front of its gate. The host and hostess were very hospitable and quickly started preparing noodles for us. They also baked corn in the kitchen stove and stir-fried pumpkin and green beans for us. After the meal, they refused the payment we offered. It was only after our long insistence that they accepted the money for the noodles only, saying that the vegetables were grown by themselves and should not be charged. The honesty and hospitality of the local farmers deeply touched us.

In the afternoon, as we walked through the village, we happened to meet the three-wheeled tractor again. We hopped on. Sitting up on the walnut-laden tractor, we returned to Guoliang Village.

Translated by Xiong Zhenru

The hostess preparing noodles for us

The Zhang Village

Readership Survey

China Tourism always appreciates feedback from its readers. In accordance with your suggestions, we have recently added a variety of new columns. Still, we need to know more of your opinions, including criticisms and suggestions. Please take a couple of minutes to complete this questionnaire and return it to us. Thank you!

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Yangtianhu Grassland	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Others: _____	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

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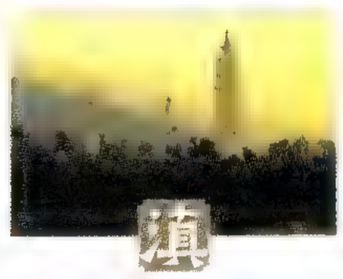

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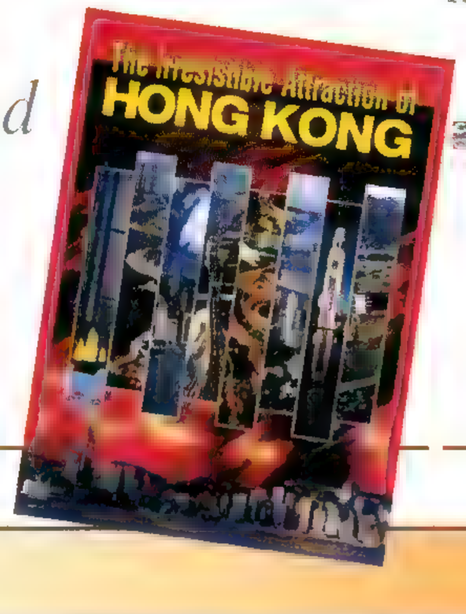

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Focus on Yunnan

The mountainous wonderland of Yunnan enjoys a favourable warm climate year round. Its capital, Kunming, sitting alongside Yunnan's largest lake, Dianchi, has the honourable name of "Spring City". The province is full of natural wonders and cultural relics, such as the Stone Forests, the Shangri-La, and the ancient cities of Dali and Lijiang. With over 20 diverse ethnic groups making up about one-third of the population, opportunities abound for you to see their characteristic cultures and customs.

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Focus on Fujian

Situated on the southeast coast, Fujian Province overlooks Taiwan Island across the Taiwan Strait. Its mountainous landscape includes the Wuyi Mountain Scenic Area, one of the UN World Heritage sites in China. The province's zigzag coastlines, numerous beaches and charming seas offer spectacular scenic beauty as well as historical and cultural interest in such places as the Drumming Wave Islet in Xiamen and the Mazu Temple in Meizhou Island.

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Focus on Shanghai

Shanghai, the largest metropolis in China, and formerly the Far East financial centre, has experienced dramatic development over the past century. The world-famous Bund along the Huangpu River shows you buildings of different historical periods and varied architectural styles, while skyscrapers are rising in the new area of Pudong. Shanghai's multiculturism is seen in its music — operas, nostalgic jazz and discos — and in the busy commercial district of Nanjing and Huaihai roads.

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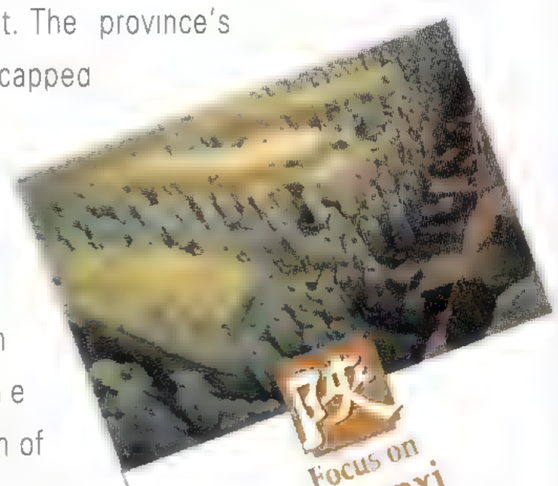
Focus on Shaanxi

Shaanxi is the cradle of the Chinese civilisation and Xi'an was the capital of 13 dynasties. This has left Shaanxi a rich legacy of historical sites and cultural relics. In the provincial capital Xi'an, there is the fascinating terracotta army unearthed from the tomb of the First Emperor, Qin Shihuang; the tomb of Tang-dynasty Wu Zetian, China's first empress; and the stele forest. The province's beauty is capped with the sheer cliffs of Mount Huashan and the yellow earth of the Loess Plateau.



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Focus on Guangdong

An important gateway into China, the fertile Pearl River Delta of the southern province of Guangdong fans out from Guangzhou to the South China Sea and borders Hong Kong and Macao. The province's natural scenic spots include the limestone pinnacles of Zhaoqing's Seven Star Crags, the red sandstone of Danxia Mountain, and the volcanic beauty of Xiqiao Mountain. The capital, Guangzhou, offers plenty of history in its museums, temples, mosques and old colonial buildings.

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Focus on Guizhou

Guizhou is a land of splendid natural scenery. Its towering mountains and karst landforms team up with the gurgling rivers and magnificent waterfalls to form a wonderful work of Mother Nature. Huangguoshu Waterfalls and the limestone caves are the province's most frequented scenic spots. The 17 ethnic groups living in the picturesque province further colour the land with vivid customs and joyous festivals. It is its natural beauty and culture that make Guizhou a perfect travel destination.

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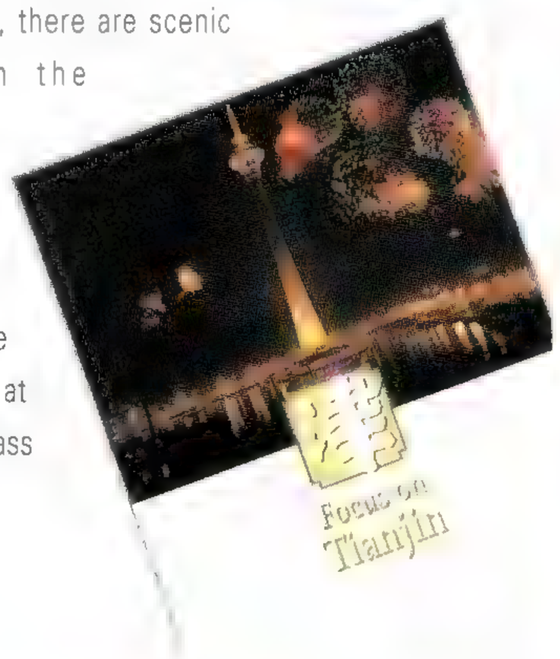
Focus on Tianjin

Tianjin, one of the four municipalities under direct Central Government administration, is an important industrial and commercial centre of China and the biggest port in the north. The history of the city can be found in its Ancient Culture Street, 100-year-old Western-style buildings, Opera Museum and Mazu Temple. Besides the TV Tower and the Haihe River in the city, there are scenic spots in the outskirts, including the Dule Temple and the Great Wall at Huangya Pass



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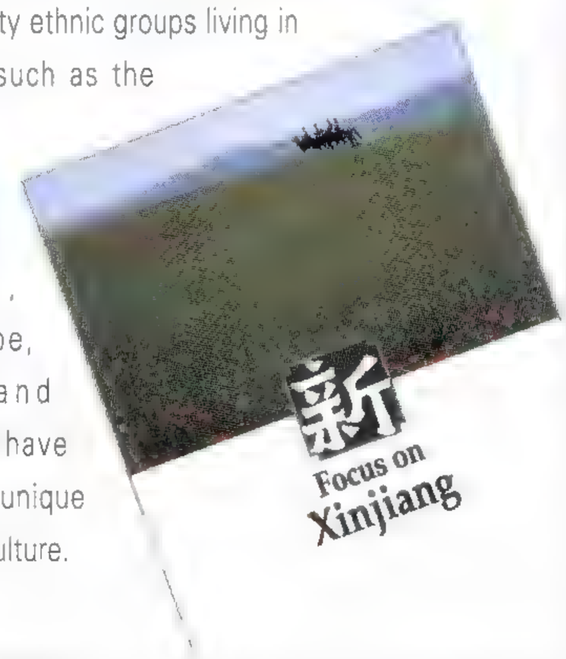
Focus on Xinjiang

On the vast land of Xinjiang in Northwest China, there are mountains, basins, deserts and lakes, which provide tourists with numerous attractions — ruins of ancient cities and tombs along the Silk Road; Turpan, an oasis in the desert; Kanas Lake, a gem imbedded in the Altay Mountains; Bayanbulak — the Swan Lake; and the world's second largest desert, the Taklimakan The minority ethnic groups living in Xinjiang, such as the Uygur, Kazak, Mongolian, Uzbek, Tajik, Xibe, Kirgiz and Tatar, all have their own unique colourful culture.



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Focus on Beijing

Beijing is a metropolis of everlasting charm. There are simply too many captivating things to see, to experience and to taste in this grand city with both old glamour and new mobility. There are historical sites such as the Palace Museum (the Forbidden City), the Temple of Heaven, the Summer Palace, and the Ming Tombs; there are also many scenic spots in its outskirts. Recently, tours have been organised for visitors to taste the real Beijing flavour of life — touring the small back lanes, having tea in a traditional-style teahouse and enjoying the Peking Opera.

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Focus on Shanxi

Shanxi Province, one of the birthplaces of the Chinese civilisation, has impressive ancient architecture and a wealth of well-preserved Buddhist temples, monasteries and grottoes. Among the most famous are the Yungang Grottoes containing some of China's oldest sculptures and Buddhist art, the Yongle Palace, the Jinci Temple, the Hanging Monastery built on a sheer cliff and the Wutai Mountain, one of China's most famous sacred Buddhist lands.

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Focus on Guangxi

Unusual topography has endowed the province with numerous spectacular karst formations — limestone caves, pinnacles and rocks. The most famous and enchanting scenic spot is Guilin, and the most travelled route, on the Lijiang River from Guilin to Yangshuo. The coastal city of Beihai has the country's largest beach, the Silver Beach. Other attractions include the varied traditional customs of ethnic minorities, the Sino-Vietnamese border area, and the mysterious Huashan cliff paintings.

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Hotels in Guangzhou

Name	Star	Address	Tel (20)	Fax (20)
Dongfang Hotel Guangzhou	*****	120 Liuhua Rd	86669900	86662775
Guangdong International Hotel	*****	339 Huanshi Rd E	83311888	83311666
Ramade Pearl Hotel Guangzhou	****	9 1st Mingyue Rd, Dongshan District	87372988	87377481
Hotel Landmark Canton	****	8 Qiaoguang Rd, Haizhu Square	83355988	83356197
Guangdong Victory Hotel	****	53 Shamian St N	81862622	81861062
Central Hotel	****	33 Jichang Rd, Sanyuanli	86578331	86592316
Gitic Riverside Hotel Guangzhou	****	298 Yanjiang Rd C	83839888	83814448
Plaza Canton	****	348 Jiangnan St C	84418888	84429645
Guangdong Hotel Guangzhou	****	309 Dongfeng Rd C	83339933	83339723
Guangdong Guest House	****	603 Jiefang Rd N	83332950	83332911
Guangzhou Ocean Hotel	****	412 Huanshi Rd E	87765988	87765475
Guangzhou Hotel	***	2 Qiyi Rd, Haizhu Square	83338168	83330791
Aiqun Hotel	***	113 Yanjiang Rd W	81866668	81883519
Zhanjiang Building (Leizhou Hotel)	***	88 Zhanqian Rd	86681688	86670075
Liuhua Hotel	***	194 Huanshi Rd W	86668800	86667828
Hongmian Hotel	***	184 Huanshi Rd W	86663989	86664879
New Mainland Hotel	***	108-122 Zhanqian Rd	86678638	86676880
Guangdong Nanhu Recreation Centre	***	Tonghe, Shahe	87706706	87706160
Baiyun Hotel Guangzhou	***	367 Huanshi Rd E	83333998	83336498
Overseas Chinese Hotel	***	90 Zhanqian Rd	86663488	86663230
Dongshan Hotel (Building No.1)	***	44 Sanyu Rd, Dongshan District	87773722	87758288
Guangdong Victory Hotel	***	54 Shamian St	88862622	88861062
Golden City Hotel Guangzhou	***	30 Qianxi St, Dongshan Temple	87754888	87751970
Guangzhou Hutian Hotel	***	156 Dongfeng Rd W	88871888	88877988
Hubin Hotel Guangzhou	***	451 Yanjiang Rd E	83868888	83868898
Sanyu Hotel (Building No.1)	***	23 Sanyu Rd	87756888	87766136
Yuehai Centre Guangzhou	***	472 Huanshi Rd E	87779688	87788364
Hotel Royal Guangzhou	***	202-208 2nd Guanghua Rd	86622888	86623214

Flights to and from **Guangzhou**

Route	Days	Dep.	Arr.	Flight
Amsterdam-Guangzhou	2 5	1900	1605	CZ 346
Guangzhou-Amsterdam	2 5	0900	1620	CZ 345
Beijing-Guangzhou	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0500	1100	PO 391
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0830	1130	CZ3196
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0900	1200	CA1321
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1025	1320	WH2137
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1210	1500	CZ3102
	1 3 4 5 7	1250	1540	XO9311
	3 6	1310	1605	CZ 346
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1400	2105	HU 270
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1450	1745	CA1301
	1 5	1450	1750	CA 174
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1530	1825	CZ3104
	2 4 7	1640	1925	CZ3114
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1735	2035	CA1309
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1740	2040	CZ3108
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1850	2140	CZ3110
Guangzhou-Beijing	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0500	1100	PO 392
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0820	1110	CZ3101
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0835	1130	CA1310
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0845	1320	HU 269
	2 5	0900	1145	CZ 345
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0915	1205	CZ3107
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1135	1420	CZ3103
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1305	1600	CA1322
	1 3 6	1330	1620	CZ3113
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1425	1720	WH2138
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1505	1750	CZ3109
	1 2 4 5 6	1525	1825	XO9312
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1815	2110	CZ3195
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1835	2130	CA1302
	2 6	2020	2320	CA 173
Hangzhou-Guangzhou	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0750	0930	F65949
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1040	1230	FM 351
	1 3 6	1130	1325	CJ6341
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1305	1455	CZ3522
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1445	1650	MU5359
	2 5	1555	1850	F65953
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1620	1815	F65931
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1845	2025	CZ3502
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1920	2120	MU5387
Guangzhou-Hangzhou	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0750	0950	FM 352
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1010	1155	F65950
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1020	1200	CZ3521
	1 3 6	1415	1600	CJ6342
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1600	1735	CZ3501
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1810	1955	MU5360

Route	Days	Dep.	Arr.	Flight
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1910	2055	F65932
	2 5	1930	2220	F65954
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	2200	2350	MU5388
Hong Kong-Guangzhou	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1155	1235	CZ 304
	3 5 7	1410	1500	CZ 354
	1 2 4 6	1410	1500	CZ 398
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1640	1725	CZ 308
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1920	2010	CZ 320
Guangzhou-Hong Kong	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0825	0920	CZ 319
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1000	1055	CZ 303
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1400	1455	CZ 307
	2 4 6	1720	1815	CZ 353
	1 3 5 7	1720	1815	CZ 397
Shanghai-Guangzhou	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0800	1000	FM 303
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0815	1015	MU5379
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0820	1100	PO 391
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0830	1035	CZ3596
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1135	1335	FM 301
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1205	1355	CZ3524
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1355	1605	CZ3538
	2 5	1500	1700	CZ3526
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1515	1705	MU5305
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1705	1850	MU5319
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1815	2025	FM 307
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1910	2105	CZ3504
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	2020	2220	FM 309
Guangzhou-Shanghai	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0500	0740	PO 392
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0755	0955	FM 308
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0900	1055	CZ3523
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1050	1300	FM 304
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1100	1250	CZ3537
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1120	1310	MU5380
	1 4	1330	1520	CZ3525
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1435	1635	FM 302
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1610	1800	CZ3503
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1755	2010	MU5306
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1830	2020	CZ3595
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1850	2105	FM 310
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1950	2150	MU5320
Sydney-Guangzhou	5	0950	1655	CZ 326
	1 4	0950	1700	CZ 322
	7	0950	1700	CZ 326
	2 6	1120	1845	CA 173
Guangzhou-Sydney	3 7	1900	0845	CZ 321
	6	2130	0830	CZ 325
	4	2130	0845	CZ 325

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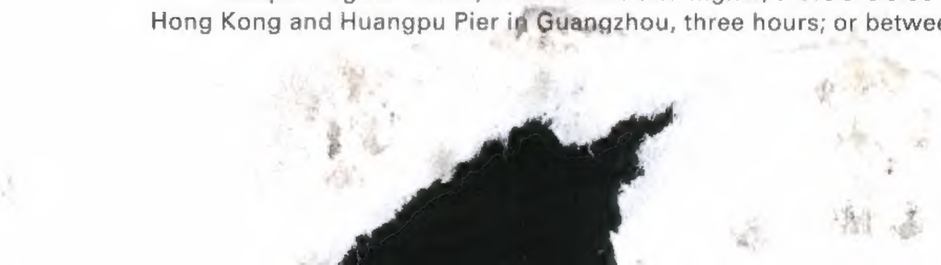
Airline codes:

CA= Air China
CJ= China Northern Airlines
CZ= China Southern Airlines
FM= Shanghai Airlines
MU= China Eastern Airlines
WH= China Northwest Airlines
XO= Xinjiang Airlines
F6= CNAC-Zhejiang Airlines

Transport between Guangzhou and Hong Kong:

Despite regular trains, direct buses and flights, there are also ferries going between two places. The ferries go between the pier in the China Hong Kong City (Tsim Sha Tsui) in Hong Kong and Huangpu Pier in Guangzhou, three hours; or between the pier in the Shun Tak Centre (Sheung Wan) in Hong Kong and Shunde Harbour in Guangzhou, two hours.



NEXT ISSUE

Highlights of Issue No. 253

- The sound and sight of flowing water is naturally associated with tranquillity. The cross-boundary travel route of **Guangxi-Vietnam** we're introducing in the next issue could thus be described as a "journey of peace". Through the eye of a young explorer, we are exposed to some of the well-known scenic spots in both China's Guangxi and Vietnam — Guilin, Yangshuo, the Lijiang River and Beihai, and Mong Cai, Bai Chay and Halong Bay. Without a detailed plan but with a bold heart, the correspondent covered far more ground than she had originally anticipated. Her account of the trip and some of her most memorable moments are enough to inspire our own thoughts of travel.

- Cut off from the outside world by rivers and mountains, the marks of history can still be found in **Eya**, a small area situated in the Muli Tibet Autonomous County in the Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province. The Naxi people still use their pictograph; elders wear long braids of the Qing-dynasty style; and their unique marriage customs remain the same as in ancient times.

- Staying in a **Cave Dwelling** in Shanxi was a new and fascinating experience for a traveller from Hong Kong. The caves are actually beautifully built with an arched façade. The door and windows are decorated with exquisite wooden carvings. Dug into the terrace on the Loess Plateau, the cave houses can keep warm in winter and cool in summer. And the hospitality and sincerity of the local people exceed all expectations.

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